

## **A voyage to North America, and the West Indies in 1817 / By E. Montule...**

A VOYAGE TO NORTH AMERICA, AND THE WEST INDIES, IN 1817.

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A VOYAGE TO NORTH AMERICA, THE WEST INDIES, AND THE Mediterranean.

### **LETTER I.**

*New York, 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1816.*

I have already examined this beautiful city, which appears to have been spared by winter; still presenting some foliage of the Italian poplars which decorate Broadway, the principal street of New York, and perhaps the most magnificent in the world. The advantageous position of the city, and its proximity to the sea, render it the best port in America; a forest of masts announce it in the distance, for one of those ports where the commerce of the world is concentrated; from whence its riches are afterwards distributed throughout the interior by means of numerous channels. A vast influx of strangers, gives to New York that lively air which characterizes several cities of Europe, and which is not generally the case, as I am informed, with the other American cities: it is large, and of a triangular form; some

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of the streets are straight, with flat pavements on either side, for the accommodation of foot-passengers. The houses, for the most part of brick, are often repainted; they consist of two or three stories, and are decorated by flights of steps, and balconies, tastefully arranged, which produce an agreeable effect, while the streets are built in such a manner, that the stabling and coach houses, never interfere with the main street. Each *ilet* is divided by two streets, which usually cut at right angles, and to which the yards of the mansions adjoin; it seems, that when the city was first founded, the streets were decorated with poplars and plantains, nearly all of which have perished.

I took up my residence at a French boarding-house, where, for breakfast, dinner, supper, and the use of an apartment by no means elegant, I was charged seven dollars per week, not quite one pound ten, being far more moderate than what I had been previously told was the usual mode of charging. *Voyages, Vol. V. B*

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In this country no passports are required, you jump ashore with no other baggage save the dress you wear, and no questions are asked respecting the motives of your journey; but the luggage must pass the customs, which impost being the most ostensible revenue of the United States, its administration is here as rigorous as elsewhere. In this respect I was more annoyed than any other passenger, being compelled to ask for a permit to convey away my trunks, and the articles absolutely necessary for my use; this I obtained, after taking my oath upon the bible, which I kissed. I now conceived myself freed from all further importunity; such, however, was not the case, for an officer then proceeded to turn over every thing I had, with the most scrupulous attention, and the following day it was requisite that I should have another permit, for such articles as were subject to an impost, but in despite of every effort, I would not this time repeat the oath. After some little difficulty, my permit was delivered, formerly the oath alone sufficed; but a European, (I do not think it requisite to tell you of what country he was) having imported a vast quantity of clock and watch machinery, swore that he had nothing but articles for his own particular use, and got the whole ashore with the greatest facility, but the next day, having imprudently

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spoken upon the subject to a watchmaker of the city, he fearing a competition, denounced him, when the whole stock was seized, and from that moment the taking an oath was not deemed sufficient by the custom-house authorities.

My first excursion was to inspect the steam-boats, an invention as ingenious as useful. We have, as I may say, abandoned its application and glory to the nation I am now visiting; which has profited by it in a manner that exceeds all calculation. As I have not yet been accustomed to examine these structures, I shall not at present give you any accurate description, but what infinitely surprizes me is the size, and extraordinary cleanliness which appears throughout these vessels.

I never witnessed any thing to be compared with the appearance of Broadway;—elegant carriages roll with rapidity the whole length of the street; females, fashionably attired, parade the flags, and shops and magazines, as extensive as superbly decorated, occupy the ground-floors of the houses skirting either side.

There is no country where the fair sex deserves that appellation better than at New York. The females are, generally speaking, airy and well made, being from five feet to five feet two inches in height; their features are delicate, and their complexion of the most dazzling whiteness; add to this flaxen, or chesnut-coloured hair, and soft blue eyes of a melancholy cast, and then you have the complete picture of the North American fair one. Their carriage is at once easy and decorous, nay, even the 3 women of the town do not appear such, from the manner in which they conduct themselves.

The edifices which I remarked in the city, combine freshness and solidity in their appearance, sometimes accompanied by elegance; but the architecture is not always in a good style. The Hospital, the buildings of which are extensive and well-disposed, presents throughout its interior the greatest degree of cleanliness: which is no less observable in the prisons, where those detained display an unparalleled activity in fulfilling the various duties imposed upon them. It is needless for me to state how far preferable this method

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is to that adopted by us: here you easily perceive that a man on quitting a prison, has imbibed a relish for labour, while in France, he is accustomed, with idleness, to all those vices wherewith he was previously unacquainted, and of which he found precepts and examples in abundance among his companions.

The Palace of Justice is a fine extensive fabric of white marble, which is common enough in this country; it is to be regretted that this monument, upon which much must have been expended, should not be well proportioned, being deficient in regard to elevation. The churches and towers are numerous, and the latter being somewhat in the gothic style, produces a very picturesque effect.

The Quays, built with cavities, are extremely convenient for accommodating vessels, but very disagreeable for those who are only desirous of walking to enjoy the beautiful prospect of the port.

Having passed the North River, you immediately find yourself in New Jersey, one of the States of the Union. I went several times for the purpose of sporting, but found very little game. The face of the country is sandy; and in all directions, even upon the summits of the hills, large rocks appear level with the surface of the ground, variously inclined towards the horizon; they appear to have been worn and rolled by vast currents of water; the villages, on account of their neatness, and the dwellings, from the ease displayed in their exterior, bring to mind some districts in Germany; every thing betokens affluence. It seems, that in this country, no family could inhabit a house which abounded with the negligence and disorder which is apparent in various countries of Europe.

I had letters of introduction to several French merchants, and having no favour to ask, I was every where welcomed with the most marked attention. One of them offered to introduce me to M. Regnaud de St. Jean d'Angely, whose son was formerly with me at the Military School, and I accepted with pleasure a proposal that excited my curiosity. The situation of a man remarkable for his rank and talents, is always rendered peculiarly

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interesting in retirement, or exile; for it is there we are enabled to study correctly his character. The manners of M. Regnaud are affable, and his conversation elegant, but I think I can discern that, notwithstanding his endeavours to disguise *ennui*, his thoughts are bent upon France, and that he burns with a desire to revisit his native soil.\*

\* M. Regnaud returned and expired the very day of his arrival. The wonderful change which had taken place in his fortunes and political situation, had overturned all his ideas; he was attacked by a mental disorder. He was a man possessing great talents, and those who have spoken of him most, did not appreciate him justly.

The Theatre of New York is a fine building, but not yet knowing sufficiently the English language, I could not enjoy the representation. No soldiers of the police are here seen, such duties being performed by the watchmen; upon the least alarm, they instantly assemble, to the number of *eight* or *ten* at one spot, being only armed with a stick; these, in conjunction with the firemen, are empowered to yield assistance in cases of fires, which are common in some quarters of the city, where many of the dwellings are of wood.

The commerce of New York is very extensive, its port possessing an incalculable advantage over all the others of the United States. The Eastern River joining an arm of the sea, prior to its passing before the city, the vessels are not in any season stopped by the ice: the most frequent intercourse is with England and France; but the duties on merchandize manufactured in the latter country are enormous, though our merchants have not yet found that there is any thing too beautiful or too expensive for the American market.

The horses are generally handsome, but tame, and seem to justify the idea which one entertains of a characteristic gentleness which pervades all the animal kingdom of America.

Slavery, which is abolished in many other states, is not in this, and negroes are found in considerable numbers.

Some days back I witnessed the presentation of swords of honour to those generals who had distinguished themselves during the last war; I cannot imagine why some persons find these distinctions incompatible with republicanism. The Roman people had very similar customs: the militia is perfectly organized, and manœuvred with all possible precision.

There are some coffee-houses at New York; these establishments, which had their origin in the East, appear to make but a slow progress upon this continent; they are appropriated to persons of idle habits, and every one here is occupied with commerce.

I am, &c.

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### LETTER II.

*Philadelphia, 3 d December, 1816.*

New York is an hundred miles distant from Philadelphia; I set sail in a very large and commodious steam-boat, containing from fifty to sixty passengers. The voyage is particularly agreeable, and the table as well served as if you were at a good tavern. Having proceeded about eighteen miles, we disembarked near a small town where we found stages in readiness, being vehicles open on every side, much lighter than our diligences, but, notwithstanding, very incommodious in winter. In this manner I proceeded as far as Trenton, a pretty town near which general Moreau formerly resided; it is situated on the Delawar, which you cross, over a very extraordinary bridge, being built in such a manner that you walk on the chord of the arches, and not upon the tangent; it is of wood, separated in two parts, boarded and edged with foot-ways. On passing it you leave to the right and left immense arches, from whence descend pieces of wood, which secure the whole together. Six miles from hence, Joseph Buonaparte, Count de Survilliers, has

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retired. Curiosity to behold a king changed to a private individual, made me request a letter of introduction from M. Regnaud, and, quitting the stage, I hired a carriage which transported me to Burlington, near the mansion of Joseph. His reception was courteous, and he was very conversant: he spoke of France with peculiar interest, and asked me some questions as to the effect produced upon the death of Marshal Ney, the affair at Grenoble, &c. this conversation took place while he led me over his estate: he regretted that his brother had not gained the free shores of America, and expressed the anguish he felt on contemplating the horrible exile to which he was doomed. He enquired if I designed, when, replying in the affirmative, he requested I would examine some landscapes executed by himself; and I may without flattery, or calling to mind that he had once been a king, very justly compliment his ability as an artist; this led to a disquisition on the fine arts, which he obviously cultivated. Fortune, by which he had been so rapidly elevated, and so quickly abandoned, has placed him in the heart of that tranquillity which his character appears fitted to enjoy. The mansion which he is erecting is not very spacious, but beautifully situated on an eminence that skirts the banks of the Delaware.

On arriving at Philadelphia, I placed those funds which it was not expedient that I should carry with me, and took up my residence at an American hotel of considerable magnitude, very clean, and extremely well kept; but although the table was copiously served, yet the mode of cooking did not agree with my palate, and I consequently changed for a French boarding-house, where I was perfectly satisfied.

M. Laurent Faurés, to whom I had been introduced by Messrs. Curcier and Ravisies, the merchants with whom I had placed my funds, frequently conducts me to view the objects worthy notice in Philadelphia, which is the most beautiful and largest city of the United States; nor does there exist one perhaps in the known world, which is built on so regular a plan. All the streets are either straight, or parallel with the Delaware, being at least eight fathoms wide, paved with small round stones, similar to many places in the South of France. On either side there are footways from eight to ten feet wide, paved with bricks, and kept remarkably clean, and about every hundred paces distant, on either side the

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street, there are pumps supporting lamps, added to which, poplars and plantain-trees skirt the foot-paths, whose verdure, during the summer season, must agreeably break the uniform colour of the houses, the major part of which are built of brick. The doors are usually very much ornamented, and open upon a flight of white marble steps, decorated by a tasteful iron balcony, which is kept peculiarly neat and clean. In the middle of the city is Market Street, being nearly twice the width of any other, which divides in the centre all those that run parallel with the river. The market is kept in the middle, being a kind of granary, supported by pillars, the whole displaying an air of perfect cleanliness. It is divided in several parts, each appropriated to its peculiar kind of merchandize; of which the butchers struck me most forcibly. This class of men, who appear perfectly well off, are habited in a shirt, or frock, of the most delicate whiteness. The market is only held in the morning, they do not break the bones as is customary with us, but saw them, which gives the meat a far more pleasing appearance.

In no city of Europe would it be possible to apply the denominations which are given to the streets of Philadelphia; all those conducting straight from the river to Market street, are called first, second, third; while those stretching north or south of Market street, are named first north, second south, &c.

It is unfortunate that the American taste has not been sufficiently led to the cultivation of architecture: their edifices are solid and well-built; but, sometimes, on contemplating a sumptuous monument, the eye of an artist is struck with the most revolting contrasts. Very frequently, octagon pillars, chiseled, and loaded with ornaments and paintings, are made to support other columns of the Grecian order, and oblong square windows are often surmounted by those of an arched, or Gothic form; the whole, however, is of the best materials, and the most masterly workmanship. Will these incongruities long continue? It is to be hoped that the American, who is the enemy of every species of prejudice, will not permit the introduction of a perverted taste in an art so truly interesting to a polished nation.

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The population of Philadelphia amounts to at least from 85 to 90,000 souls. No individual presents an exterior indicatory of want; even the negroes, who are in great numbers, and free, always appear well habited. You never there see an individual reduced to the humiliating necessity of imploring charity at the hands of his fellow man, only to receive, in reply, a brutal and cruel refusal. The facility with which a livelihood is procured by the tillage of land, the high price of manual labour, and the facility of exporting merchandise, will, in all probability, long continue to preserve the inhabitants of the United States in this happy situation.

Among the numerous edifices which ornament this fine city, the Hospital is particularly distinguishable, and its anterior answers completely to the magnificence displayed without. The statue of its founder, William Penn, is placed at the entrance. It is worthy remark, that the great man is represented in the costume he always wore, being that of a Quaker, and not attired like a Roman, whose robes would not have sat worse upon him than many others, whose shoulders tire decorated with such habiliments.

### *The Hospital at Philadelphia.*

The library is at once elegant and well built, having been founded by Franklin, whose statue decorates the facade; it is rich with English, French, and Latin authors.

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The Mansion, or Town-house, is magnificent in the extreme; and the churches, generally speaking, are fine, and well constructed; every religion has its own, which is saying much for a country tolerating every sect; that of the quakers, the first inhabitants of Pennsylvania, is very numerous.

### *The Mansion, or Town House, at Philadelphia.*

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The theatre is illuminated by hydrogen gas, which is done by applying a light to the tube of the lustre, and in a moment the whole building presents one blaze of splendor.

Before I enter further on a description of the United States, I will simply add, that from New York to this city the road is covered with inns, which, for the most part, are well kept, offering every species of accommodation to the traveller. The soil, though sandy, is nevertheless productive; the views are beautiful and variegated; but the dwellings, although extremely clean, appear like card-houses to the European eye, which is habituated to behold edifices raised as much for future times as the present. The American, though fond of his offspring, nevertheless thinks that they should also labour to enrich themselves. In Europe we estimate the fortune of an individual in proportion to his revenues; in America they only speak of their capital. I should have stated that their lands do not appear sufficiently cultivated. The spirit of commerce which has exclusively introduced itself into all ranks of society, is prejudicial to the advancement of agriculture. But this evil only exists in the large cities to the East, that is to say, near the coast, where the most extensive commerce presents itself to the ambition of the speculator.

The environs of Philadelphia are prettily diversified; and the banks of the Skulkill, which furnishes water for the city, are decorated by art, in order to display the most enchanting objects.

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There is a curious Museum in Philadelphia, which is the property of an individual, possessing great taste. Government furnished him with the structure necessary for the reception of his objects of Natural History, which he has collected in considerable quantities.

He possesses the entire skeleton of a mammoth, remains of which have been discovered at 30 or 50 feet deep in the ground, in South America.— (*See the Engraving.*)

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The costliness of the Americans consists, if I may, so express myself, in the exterior. It is not at dinners and suppers that they display their magnificence, in carriages and horses, which, as I have before remarked, are generally very good. I have myself rode some, and found their pace an unsteady motion, something between the trot and the gallop. The Negroes are free in Pennsylvania, of which Philadelphia is the capital. But they have not yet succeeded in destroying that sentiment of contempt for that race of men, whose outward skin constitutes their only difference from us. They possess the moral means equally with ourselves, and are, unquestionably, our superiors in physical qualifications.

You perhaps wish for a sketch of the American manners. After my projected voyage I shall know them better, and will then endeavour to satisfy you; up to the present period I have found them gentle, generous, but phlegmatic.

As to the general appearance of the country, my curiosity is not satisfied; it bears too strong a resemblance to Europe; the trees of the forests, though differing individually, produce, in mass, the same effect. I have determined to set out for the Antillas. Mr. Curcier and his nephew have given me letters of recommendation. The *Francis*, a vessel of 400 tons, going to set sail, I joined on the 25th December, in a steam-boat at Newcastle, a small town built by the Swedes, when the Europeans first established themselves in North-America. The wind proving adverse, we remained there for some days, and only proceeded on our voyage to be again retarded near the mouth of the Delawar.

1 *st* January, 1817.

We had cast anchor, and awaited the tide and a favourable wind, when the mate, under some trifling pretext, came to high words with the carpenter, who not obeying, the captain appeared, and seizing him by the collar, shook him violently; upon this the carpenter, clasping him round the body, strove to throw him overboard. The captain resisted, and we arrived to separate them, just as that part of the deck upon which they were alternately thrown, opened on a sudden, and being precisely above the ladder used to come on

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board, our two boxers fell headlong Voyages, Vol. V. C 10 into the sea. Let any one imagine the cooling thus experienced, and he will be astonished that the fury of the carpenter was not in the least degree abated; on the contrary, it seemed to augment his passion, for he squeezed the captain still tighter, and gave him several violent blows, while the captain's wife, who beheld this scene, gave evident marks of her terror. The ship's boat being happily near at hand, we succeeded in extricating them; but it was impossible matters should remain thus, and it was found requisite to order this man to be ironed, who was known for a desperate character; wherefore the necessary steps were taken to prevent a revolt amongst the crew. Each of the passengers got his arms ready, and we marched in order, as upon an affair of importance; the carpenter, of whom the mate went in search, did not give him time to arrive, but rushing furiously from the hatch-way, ran upon him with a large pair of compasses in his hand, but the sight of a pistol, presented to his breast, stopt him short; he dropt his arm, and also gave up a chisel which he had secreted: he was then easily ironed, and we were disencumbered of him by his being conveyed to shore.

This event makes us fear some other mutiny during the voyage; but there are several passengers on board, and we shall keep ourselves on the alert.

I am, &c. &c.

### LETTER III.

*In sight of St. Thomas's, 19 th January, 1817.*

This second sea voyage seemed likely to be more agreeable than the first. It was a fine, large, commodious vessel; several passengers spoke French, while the others appeared well disposed to teach me the English. The American manner of living on shipboard is very frugal; and when you take your passage, they only agree to furnish you with the ship's provision, consisting of biscuit, salt-meat, and rum mixed with water, which is the accustomed beverage. Any other little necessities are bought separately, such as wine,

poultry, butter, &c.; a circumstance attended with no little trouble. As all sea-voyages bear a striking resemblance to each other, I shall speak very lightly of the present. The fine weather, which was almost uniformly the same, was only interrupted at intervals by squalls, which are sometimes so violent as to dismast a ship, particularly when carrying a press of sail; this is generally followed by a torrent of rain.

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The captain, named Pryor, to whom the vessel belonged, had, for a considerable time, quitted the sea service. He was repairing to the islands, in order to load his vessel with a cargo of *lignum vitæ*, which is used in making blocks, and with which he intended sailing for Holland, there to dispose of the cargo and vessel.

Among the passengers was a young Frenchman of St. Domingo, Mr. Daumas, and Mr. Burklé, a Wurtemburgher, long established in America, but he has not lost the good customs of his native country, being fond of choice wine and good living; and without him I believe we should have lived in our cabins like the common sailors. The Americans are very careless of this article, perhaps from idleness more than subriety, for when any delicacy is placed upon the table, they know perfectly well how to select it. Mr. Burklé took charge of the kitchen, and issued his orders to the cook, who, as is customary in American ships, was a French negro. Mr. Burklé is frank in his behaviour, but impetuous, and a very original character; he possesses an excellent memory, which is stored with a collection of anecdotes, the recital of which charmed, at intervals, the sameness of the voyage.

On the 14th we passed the tropic; this occurred during the night, and I fully expected that the rising sun would shine upon my second baptism. In fine, the sailors of every nation believe that Neptune exacts this libation upon individuals, who, for the first time, enter the torrid zone. The ensuing day, however, passed without the ceremony; at which I was sorry, being desirous to know it. The captain, fearful that they would subject his wife to the ordeal, gave orders, I believe, that every one should be spared from undergoing the

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ceremony. From that day, notwithstanding the sail which served us for a tent, we were literally stifled with the intense heat.

I do not think I shall weary you, by relating a shipwreck experienced by M. Burklé, who has been many voyages, the detail of which appeared to me very interesting. It is himself who speaks.

“I had embarked on board an American ship, and we were to the South of St. Domingo, when a tremendous tempest drove us on a small island surrounded by rocks, or rather needles, against which the waves dashed with horrible fury. The ship struck afore, when all the larboard side yawning to the deep, she was almost immediately filled; you may imagine the terror I experienced when, awakened by the shock, and springing from my birth, I found myself in the water; I thought all hope was extinct, and that my last hour was at hand. I mounted on deck, when the stern of the ship disappearing from my sight, I ran forward, and perceived the rocks at a very small distance; without hesitation I threw myself out, but the darkness bewildered me; I missed my aim, and my breast struck violently against one of the sharp rocky points. I instantly fell, and should have been infallibly crushed by the shock of the vessel, which was incessantly dashed to and fro against the rocks, when a sailor who had seized me, preserved me from the impending fate. This man had entertained the same idea as myself, and his promptitude in its execution saved my life. Thus situated, those of the crew who remained on board, lowering the boat, arrived at the rocks where we were, and we now recollected that the precipitancy with which we had quitted the ship, had disabled us from transporting any thing, and that we were almost naked. Two sailors were bold enough to venture again upon our unfortunate vessel, already a wreck, from whence they threw their sacks of clothes, and a certain quantity of biscuits.

“Perceiving that the sea which raged against the rocks where we were, was, on the contrary, perfectly calm between these precipices and the land, (which we saw at no great distance;) We exerted all our efforts to shove the boat over the rocks, which we effected

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with difficulty, and then rowed towards the island without having scarcely uttered a single syllable. The dawn began to break, which soon rendered manifest the whole extent of our misfortune. Our first glance was directed towards the vessel; it had entirely disappeared; as for the island it was sterile and desert; nothing but a few shrubs rose in the centre, forming a small bower, which some days after became, as you will find, a very important spot for me.

“From the moment of our landing not one of us had spoken; and we regarded each other with a mournful aspect, the expression of which it would be difficult to describe, when the captain, who had received a violent contusion in the loins, striving to appear less overcome, spoke as follows: ‘Gentlemen, having escaped the horrors of the deep, we are determined to struggle for existence; let us not be cast down; let those who are capable proceed to search through the island for water, of which we all stand in need; as for myself, who am scarce able to move, I will kindle a fire, and perform such offices as my present state will admit me to execute.’ At these words we all arose, and having found the necessary implements in the sailors' sacks, with some vestiges of a former wreck, which had long lain upon the shore, we kindled a fire. A sailor then gave me a pair of trowsers, when we set off, and during the whole of the morning I vainly sought for a spring, but found what was of infinite value to me, being as much water as would fill a tumbler, which was deposited in the cavity of a rock, together with some shell-fish, resembling the snail, the flavour of which was pretty good. Some of these I carried to the captain, as well as a little water in a shell. It is difficult for those to imagine, who have never been similarly circumstanced, how dreadful and imperious, is the call of thirst. Thus daily we repaired in search of a livelihood, nor was this phrase ever more appropriately applied. On the ensuing day I discovered some herbs, which appeared to me of an emollient nature. I crushed them between two stones, and made a cataplasm for the captain, who was in a few days able to walk; and from this period we proceeded together in our search. One day we discovered on the other side of the island the remains of a vessel long since wrecked; thither we bent our steps, but it was at some distance

from the shore, and we were dubious how to act. To cause the boat to be transported gave us, apprehension, in consequence of a chain of rocks which advanced far into the ocean; and besides, must I confess it, we were anxious, if possible, to profit alone by the discovery. When man is reduced to the last, perhaps I ought to say to the first necessities, he becomes the slave of egotism. We therefore resolved to form a raft, and spent two days in, completing the labour. We then repaired, but not without difficulty, to the wreck of the vessel, which was almost entirely in pieces, and what it contained was spoiled by the sea-water. A single cask of soft-water, though old, was a treasure for us; but we discovered nothing else which could be of utility in our painful situation. We then returned to land, and concealed our barrel in the bower before mentioned; but not sufficiently to prevent the sailors, who noticed our daily walks to this spot, from discovering it, and who, in a short time, deprived us of its contents. From this moment I recommenced my searches with increased ardour. I found the eggs which two or three fowls that I had seen, without being able to secure, at different times had no doubt deposited. One day having penetrated farther than usual into the bower, I perceived some trees more elevated than the rest; I drew nearer, when what was my astonishment on perceiving, in the middle of a pretty grass-plot, an old tent. I suddenly entered, and in the midst of cordage and other remnants of a wreck, I beheld two enormous pitchers; the one full of molasses, the other of water; but of a water so fresh and good, that for the last fifteen days I had not partaken of any thing like it. At this sight I offered sincere thanks to heaven, though my riches still made me an egotist; for I concealed it in the thickest part of the wood, and every coming day, after making many circuitous windings, I repaired thither, in order to partake of my repast. On revisiting this tent some reflections occurred to me, that our mournful situation had, till the present instant, dispelled from my mind. I demanded of myself who could have erected this tent? and after various perplexing 14 conjectures, I came to the determination that it must belong to persons who assuredly visited the island to take advantage of the remnants of vessels which were so frequently cast on shore in tempestuous weather. This idea consoled me, and gave rise to the hope, of one day witnessing their arrival; in consequence of which I passed those that succeeded with more tranquillity. I had

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forgotten to state, that the day after our debarkation, the sea had brought us a barrel of flour from our vessel. I was not mistaken in my conjecture, for some days after, that is to say, having continued five weeks in this desert, we descried a sail, and instantly made a large fire, which was perceived. When the vessel arrived to rescue us from our deplorable situation, we had none of us yielded to the cruel hand of destiny, but we were exhausted and meagre, and devoured with our eyes every thing that was set before us. This cast of physiognomy, combined with our long beards, gave us the most terrific appearance, and in the first instance caused our deliverers to start back with dismay. We were safely conveyed to St. Thomas's, where a poor fellow out of charity took me on board the small vessel he commanded, and landed me at Baltimore, where I presented myself in my ragged attire before an individual who was my debtor in 500 francs, or £22, which I in vain demanded, and was compelled to have recourse to another person of my acquaintance, who procured for me a barber and a tailor. From thence I repaired to Philadelphia, where I once more embraced my family, which I had, for so long a time, despaired of ever again beholding."

This adventure has not discouraged Mr. Burklé, who continues to perform sea voyages in pursuing his commercial speculations.

On the 18th January, at night, we saw land at the very moment when we were convinced that the captain was in error. The island of St. Martin first struck our regard; it appeared in shape like an apple, which, resembling an obscure cloud, rose above the horizon; shortly after we saw the island of Anguilla to the Southwest, which proved that the captain had perfectly well directed his course, and shortly after we came in sight of the famous rock called *Sombrero*, extremely dangerous, from being level with the surface of the water; but very useful because it designates to mariners the passage they must pursue, to enter the half-circle which the islands of the Gulf of Mexico appear to form. The following morning we perceived St. Thomas's, but so much resembling a light cloud, that the utmost stretch of the seaman's eye could alone discern it. At sun-set we approached very near, and I can assure you that never did country scenery so forcibly strike me, as much from the diversity

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of objects as the striking appearance of the *tout en semble*. Figure to your imagination a mountain rising majestically like an amphitheatre, one half of 15 the base of which is bathed by the waters; add to this other verdant spots, which, rising up as by enchantment, almost completely terminate the circular form of the port; and you may form some idea of the arrival at St. Thomas's. The last rays of the sun, whether the regard is directed towards the sterile summit of the mountain, the forests that surround it, or the fields of sugar cane, cultivated in the valleys beneath, vivify this enchanting picture; while the city, which rises nearly upon three circular hills; a fort advancing into the sea; a venerable tower, formerly the refuge of free-booters, together with the verdant plumes of the cocoa and palms, tend but to increase the charm.

I have the honour, &c. &c.

### LETTER IV.

*St. Thomas's, the 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1817.*

On my arrival here I lodged at the house of a French mulatto, who for seven francs, or about six shillings per day, provided every thing for me. My first day was employed in strolling about the town, which is curiously populous, presenting a mixture of French, English, Germans, Spaniards, together with negroes and mulattos of all tribes; in short, the assemblage at the public market might well be likened to the labourers at the tower of Babel, with this difference, that they are not subjected to the dilemma of not comprehending their several languages. On the contrary, if it occurs that the person addressed does not understand the idiom of the person speaking, he immediately talks in his own tongue.

I repaired to Messrs. Réo and Deville, French merchants, with a letter of recommendation from M. Curcier: I was very politely welcomed, and it was there I found your letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> October, which a swifter-sailing vessel than ours had transported from Philadelphia two days before. I shall henceforth endeavour to profit by your advice, and reply to your

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questions, by examining accurately the manners of the people I visit; I shall study to distinguish their virtues and vices; and to know them thoroughly I shall associate with them as much as possible. These remarks are not always so easily made as might be conjectured; for the traveller identifies himself so much with surrounding objects, that he is frequently compelled to have recourse to a self-examination., in order to distinguish what, from a distance, would certainly have surprized and interested him.

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I was agreeably surprized to find at M. Deville's a fellow countryman, ancient Canon of St. Julian, at Mons. Having spoken for a time concerning France, the conversation became general, and I found in M. Deville a very honourable and intelligent personage; but, as is customary with the favoured of fortune, he assumes a brisk and authoritative tone in the course of argument. Having for a time discussed the topic of commerce, we began to talk of the country I now inhabit, when inquiry was made as to my opinion respecting the islands, whereto I replied, that having often heard descriptions from persons who had visited them, they had uniformly answered, that if the islands were not the summits of mountains, there were mountains in the islands; a reply by no means satisfactory to my mind: I then added that now I beheld them with my own eyes, I was more than ever led to believe they are the heights of a chain of eminences, as distant from the centre of the earth as the Alps are removed from the Pyrenees; upon which, being asked for a more ample explanation, I begged their indulgence for the circumscribed ability I possessed, and then proceeded thus:

“If we allow a movement of the earth's axis, which tends to approach the poles of the equator, a movement well known under the title of the *Mutation of the earth's axis* , it is agreed that the ocean is proportionably expanded, and consequently elevated as it approximates to the torrid zone, we may easily imagine that countries formerly in northern latitudes, and then above the level of the sea, becoming nearer to the equator, would be inundated; which effect would be equally felt in the halves diametrically opposed of the two hemispheres; whereas in the two others, lands would rise from the waters, as may

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be instanced in North America and New Holland, which are constantly forming lands of alluvion, while South America and China, on the contrary, are daily suffering decrease; and in favour of the mutation of the earth's axis may be added, that there still exists a tradition in the Maldivé islands, from which we learn that they formerly constituted a continental mass, or at least an immense island. Now that these islands are under the equator, that is to say, at the spot where the water is necessarily most elevated, the summits only appear, forming this numerous archipelago.

“Your Islands present to me altogether nothing but a chain of ordinary mountains, and on considering the map, I even think I can discern that they have a direction dependent on each other. The sand banks which exist between them, appear to unite them, and, in short, every thing leads me to conjecture that they once constituted, in mass, a part of the continent.”

M. Deville replied, that these mountains were not of a similar nature to the great chains of the two continents, but that they were indubitably volcanic; not possessing, as yet, a sufficient knowledge of the islands, I could only enquire if calcareous and horizontal rocks were not to be found; when, after some reflection, he said he believed such to be the case; an admission upon his part, which seems to exclude all idea of a volcanic eruption, which must necessarily have overthrown the rocks, and inclined them in different forms to the horizon; even suppose, continued I, that a volcano ejected them from the floods, in what manner did they become covered with vegetation? above all, here, where the easterly winds prevail, which, from Africa, would have deposited all the heterogeneous particles wherewith it might be impregnated; and from whence, too, sprang the divers species of animal creation? The idea of succession, or a progressive change of the waters, which the mutation of the earth's axis would impel, is it not a much more plausible hypothesis? An argument of this nature could not be other than undecided, and we concluded by regretting that Buffon had not travelled and examined nature more accurately upon the very spot itself.

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This conversation inspired me with a wish to ascend the mountain which commands the island of St. Thomas. I was deceived in the distance, and made a much longer excursion than I had imagined. I traversed immense fields covered with the sugar-cane, and it was with infinite delight I considered this plant, so useful, and, above all, so new to my eyes! I attained with difficulty the height of the mountain, where I found enormous cubical rocks, apparently thrown here and there, which, in their wild disorder, produced a most picturesque mass of ruins. Between these I found numerous plants and shrubs, the names and forms of which were totally unknown to me. I nevertheless discovered the aloe, and a considerable quantity of the *palmachristi*, and on arriving at the extremest summit, which for a length of time had appeared to recede from me, a view the most beautiful and expanded was spread before my sight. At my feet were numerous ships riding at anchor, others sailing from, or entering the port, appearing in almost a perpendicular point of view; on the opposite side, to the north, was a charming bay, at the extremity of which, and amidst a forest of colonial trees, appeared what I was told to be the most healthful habitation on the island. The rays of the sun, whose inflamed disk was on the point of sinking beneath the waters, seemed lightly gliding upon the rippled surface of the deep, divinely tinging the summits of the island of Porto Rico, which I distinctly beheld. Having seated myself, I gazed on this calm and ravishing page of nature; I forgot that the sun had set, and that the west was no longer tinged but by a faint flush of orange hue; wherefore, fatigued as I found myself, I was compelled to postpone my reflections, *Voyages, Vol. V. D 18* and hastened to descend; being desirous to curtail my route, I lost myself, when the light of a pipe, which an old negress was smoking, led me towards her, and thus was I directed in my right road.

In this manner I was enjoying in the greatest possible security the delightful country which excited my curiosity, when I learned that the yellow fever had appeared at St. Thomas's, that all strangers became its victims, and among others, that a French colonel, and an Italian general, aid-de-camp to the former king of Naples, had experienced its cruel effects. This melancholy news brought to my recollection the numerous funerals I had

witnessed; nor were the looks of Messrs. Deville and Réo, whenever I visited them, and their questions respecting the epoch of my departure, any longer matter of wonder to me, as I now perceived that they regarded me as a predestined victim; upon which I spoke with them upon the subject, and they no longer concealed from me my danger, but advised me to sail immediately. The vessel in which I had arrived was to depart in a few days for Santo Domingo, the capital of the Spanish part of the island of St. Domingo. My luggage being still on board, I secured my passage, and gave up without difficulty, all idea of a voyage to Martinico and Guadaloupe, on learning that the fever had been imported from those two colonies. The fact is, that twenty persons, at least, were victims each day, at the small town of St. Thomas, and a convincing proof of the malignancy of the distemper was, its contagion having even extended to the class of negroes.

This island is in possession of the Danes, it is about six leagues in circumference, and not extremely productive; during the war it was a neutral port, which rare privilege has excessively enriched the inhabitants. Commerce is very extensive here, being a species of *depot* for all kinds of merchandize, particularly dried English goods. As frequent conflagrations had destroyed the warehouses, they have been re-constructed with brick, surmounted by a terrace, being guarded by iron doors, so that they are safe from the effects of fire. The position of St. Thomas's to the north-east of the islands in the gulf of Mexico, facilitates the distribution of its wares in the Archipelago. The town is small; amusements are pursued with avidity, and they are addicted to play. The women are agreeable, without boasting beauty, and among the female mulattos there are some beautiful in the extreme; their tanned complexion, and sparkling black eyes, giving them an expression which is wanting to the women of North America.

I am, &c.

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**LETTER V.**

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*From St. Domingo, the 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1817.*

We sailed from St. Thomas's the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, in beautiful weather, steering for the island of Porto Rico, in possession of the Spaniards, and one of the richest of the Antillas. We were followed by a whale, which the mate endeavoured several times to harpoon without effect. Having had for two days the blue summits of St. Domingo in view, we got there on the 3<sup>d</sup> February. The position of Santo Domingo, the capital of the Spanish possessions in this island, being to the south-east, is charming; and testifies the taste and discernment of Columbus, who had appropriated it for the capital of the colony. It is at the mouth of a beautiful river, whose banks rise on either side in an amphitheatrical form; we entered the port at five in the evening, being very fearful that the Spaniards, who are rigid in trifles, would prevent us from landing on that day, which would undoubtedly have occurred, had not the supercargo of the vessel chanced to be on board, who specially interfered in this matter.

M. Daumas having acquaintances in the town, introduced me to a house where they were dancing, and singing French songs. We ascended to the ball-room, where a dozen masks received us very politely; introducing us to a table bearing flasks of gin, and other liquors, desiring us to make ourselves at home, in order that the follies they committed might not strike us too forcibly. When the dance was concluded, we were asked if we had any lodging for the night, or a place taken for our boarding, when they offered to conduct us to theirs, and we accordingly followed. This house is kept by two French creole women, being mother and daughter, one of our conductors living publicly with the latter, by whom she is pregnant; nor was it until the following day that I perceived what species of residence I inhabited; but ere long, I had reason to ascertain that such a mode of living is almost general in this burning climate; the manners being extremely licentious.

The first day was employed in getting my luggage on shore, which, with the Spaniards, is not unattended with difficulties, as the persevering custom-house officers search with the

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most scrupulous attention for every species of contraband, not to confiscate them, but to draw from you some pecuniary recompence.

Having cultivated an acquaintance with the French who lodged in the same house with myself, I had only to feel gratified by their civilities. Nearly all my countrymen whom I found abroad, pretended to have occupied distinguished posts, and frequented 20 the best societies; while their most intimate friends are persons of consequence, whom they had only addressed at the theatre, or in the public streets; but when you easily distinguish truth from falsehood, or fact embellished by fiction, or that they perceive themselves, that their stories are no more credited than they deserve to be, they very speedily resume their real characters. All the French, however, who inhabit the colonies, do not possess this characteristic failing, some, on the contrary, being well-informed and very obliging. Unfortunately, however, the latter is not the most considerable; and I am convinced, that among travellers who have not resided long enough in the colonies to conceive themselves called upon to participate in the opinions of their inhabitants, the major part will coincide with my opinion. Upon the discovery of a colony among other nations, well-educated persons, and families already wealthy, will establish themselves there, whereas in France the contrary occurs, where families at their ease very rarely think of traversing the ocean.

The town of Santo Domingo is large, and built of stone, and the streets are, generally speaking, in direct lines; the cathedral might pass for a noble edifice in any country; in it is preserved the anchor of Columbus's ship, together with his portrait, whose resemblance to that of the great man who has so recently filled the universe with his name, must appear striking to every observer. The place is surrounded by a pretty good fortification; some hills command it on one side, and it has recently been strengthened by a trench.

M. Daumas having understood that his father lived at Nissas, twelve leagues west of the town, desired to know if I would accompany him thither; I accepted his offer, and we took our departure mounted on two miserable hacks. We passed two rivers; some torrents

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nearly dry at this season, immense forests, where the route was scarcely perceptible, and barren plains, where the heat was almost insupportable. Having gained Nissas, M. Daumas enquired for the residence of his parent, when we were directed to a hut formed of leaves, and the intertwined rind of the palm-tree saying that was his habitation. Upon this the countenance of the young man underwent a visible change; he thought to find his father in affluence, and enjoyed the idea of introducing me to a charming habitation; but this regret was trifling, compared to that which awaited him beneath this miserable roof, so revolting to his sight; for upon entering our ears were saluted with moans, and we beheld upon a wretched bed, in the midst of surrounding personages, an unfortunate fellow-being at the point of death, and M. Daumas recognized his father, whom rushing forward he embraced, when the joy of beholding his son, for a moment reanimated the expiring embers of existence in the 21 bosom of the former, who begging us to be seated, detailed the misfortunes which had led him to the destitute situation in which we beheld him. In a few seconds after having concluded, he experienced a dreadful weakness, when I retired, leaving him in the midst of the negresses, who, with the assistance of a few simples, hoped to rescue him from relentless death: this, however, was vain, for he expired the following day, having nothing to bequeath his son but debts, the result of his fallen fortunes. I did not endeavour to offer consolation to a lacerated breast, which would only tend to increase its anguish; but while mingling my sorrows with his, on the cruelty of his situation, I drew him from the residence of his father, and we retired to walk on the banks of a torrent which transports the mahogany that is felled on the mountain there. I bathed myself in the torrents which are formed by a small river, on its approach to empty itself into the sea. I had kept on my shoes in consequence of the flinty bottom, and carrying my drawing book to M. Daumas, who was upon the opposite bank, when I let it fall into the stream, which was floating it rapidly away. I was, however, sufficiently expeditious to catch it before it was entirely wetted; but in so doing I lost one of my shoes, in the endeavour to regain which, the other experienced a similar fate, placing me in a very disagreeable situation as to regaining the house where my horse was, being nearly a league distant. My feet were soon in a gore of blood, nor did I advance a step without

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giving vent to a malediction, when the idea suddenly struck me, of making soles with palm-leaves, called *detaches*. These leaves are as thick as the bark of the birch-tree, and fastening them with my garters, I regained with less pain the residence of M. Daumas. I was now doomed to pass a second night similar to the foregoing, that is to say, in a loft, on a kind of blanket, which served me for a saddle during the journey; giddy, and surrounded by musquitos, a species of goat, of which I have not hitherto spoken, whose incessant hummings and stings, have before acted as preventatives to sleep. On arising in the morning, I thought of the pleasurable bed which awaited me in the town at night, but, unfortunately, we lost our way in the forest, and were necessitated to repose in the dwelling of a poor inhabitant, whose modest hut was in a manner lost amidst those solitary wilds. M. Daumas reposed upon the table on which we had previously partaken of some turtle doves, which I had fortunately shot, while I was placed in a hammock, of which several pegs being gone, I stood in danger of awaking the following day, recumbent on the floor. These hammocks are suspended in all the dwellings, from one angle to another of the largest apartment, and it is there that 22 one of the inhabitants every hour of the day, repairs to smoke his cegar, swinging in colonial nonchalance.

We saw some very fine mahogany-trees, being about the size of a full grown, service-tree. In this state they do not cost more than five francs, or four shillings and two-pence, but the expenses of felling, transport, &c. are considerable in a country where all the idle seem to be collected as in one focus. While traversing a savanna, called *the great*, which is not less than a league and a half wide, we experienced a heat so dreadfully oppressive, that I was fearful of being taken ill; it was mid-day, the sun darting his fiery rays with such force upon the earth, that there arose a moving cloud, whose undulating motion quite dazzled my sight. M. Daumas was such a sufferer, that on regaining the town he was extremely incommoded; I am indeed fearful least the recent death of his father should strike his imagination and increase the danger of his situation. On approaching Santo Domingo, a negro offered us cocoa-nuts, of which fruit I then partook for the first time, and found the milk pretty good, although much inferior to the idea I had previously formed. The

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kind of butter-meat containing the milk, as the white of the egg surrounds the yellow, and possessing all its brilliancy, is really delicious, on account of its coolness, particularly when sufficiently tender to be eaten with a spoon.

I am, &c.

### LETTER VI.

*Santo Domingo, the 26<sup>th</sup> February, 1817.*

Santo Domingo is regularly enough built, and, generally speaking, handsome; the national or citizen guard performs duty well, but the colony is in so declining a state that it is painful to witness. The governor of Western Spain formerly resided at Santo Domingo, but that vice-royalty has long been removed to Vera Cruz. The governor of Santo Domingo has, however, maintained the prerogative of neither communicating nor obeying but the direct orders of his metropolitan. He receives but a very limited salary, but is left master of a very spacious garden near the town, and on the sea-shore, which almost exclusively furnishes the market with fruits and vegetables. This produces, I believe, the greatest revenue of the Caballero don Carlos de Urrutia. This garden had been grubbed up by general Ferrand, who after having governed with universal satisfaction, when Buonaparte 23 was master of this part, put a period to his existence with a pistol, on a very trifling pretext, to the great regret of all who had witnessed his long and virtuous career.

The Spaniard's great delight consists in passing the day in idleness, his principal labour being reduced to drinking, eating, sleeping, and frequenting the churches, which are numerous: all this, however, does not prevent the two sexes from abandoning themselves to those passions which a burning climate creates and maintains. Every one on rising, at about five o'clock, takes a cup of black coffee, this being a general custom in the colonies; after which they repair to the public promenade. The ladies, habited in black, whereon the whiteness of the linen and lace contrasts agreeably, are at that hour usually unaccompanied; it is not however uncommon to see them accosted, or even escorted

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by priests; they are in general good looking, but precisely in the costume of Bazil, in the Marriage of Figaro. After this walk, and paying some visits to churches, they return home, there to remain till sun-set. At the moment when the *oratio*, or *angelus* bell rings, (no matter how distant from the pealing sound) you are bound to stop short; at least you must take off your hat, and fall upon your knees; this is a pious act which admits of no exception. In a more populous Spanish city, the sudden stoppage of an whole moving multitude, must appear very extraordinary; since it so forcibly struck me in the depopulated streets of Santo Domingo.

The women are not, strictly speaking, handsome, they are small, but well made; and their complexion, somewhat brown, is not unbecoming, but the sparkling vivacity of their eyes, and their whole physiognomy, conveys an expression of their internal thoughts and feelings.

Some time after my excursion to Nissas, passing along Commerce Street, one of the finest of the town, I saw a great crowd at the door of a house, and was informed by M. La Coste, the French physician, that the persons so assembled were waiting to witness the cock fights; that I might enter if I thought fit, that he himself often resorted there, and was fortunate in betting.

Accordingly I went in, having never witnessed a similar spectacle, of which the Spaniards here are very great amateurs. This cruel sport takes place in a species of theatre, the roof and columns of which are not unlike the covering and pillars of a cottage decorating a garden in the English style. The stairs conducting to the first tier!—You are doubtless astonished!! but really there are first places—formed like a ladder, which would well become a hen-house; be this as it may, persons of the highest ton honour this place with their presence, and bet for the black or white cock, from one, two, or three hundred piasters, up 24 to two thousand francs, or eighty pound. The cocks have no steel spurs as in England, but nature has armed them with double spurs, at least compared with those of

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France, and care is taken to render them very sharp. These birds come from the island of Porto Rico, and are sold at very high prices, according to their strength and courage.

When the two cocks equally fatigued retire to the extreme verge of the arena, their respective masters excite them; each taking his bird, puts its bleeding head into his mouth, as if intending to devour it, at the same time passing his hand under the tail, he rubs it with an aspect so truly serious and comic, that I believe no physiognomy save that of a Spaniard could support the expression. The combat then recommences, and terminates only with the death of one of the champions. The day I was present, two cocks not fighting well, their masters seized them spontaneously, and killed them by dashing them vehemently to the ground. Not being tempted to bet, I retired, reflecting on the instantaneous fury with which those birds are seized; which led me to make some comparisons not very honourable to humanity; these, however, I shall keep to myself.

Having sufficiently described the interior of the town, I shall proceed to speak of the exterior, and the various plants that adorn this superb country. The Spanish part of St. Domingo, according to the opinion of those who are acquainted with the other three, is most favoured by nature; the heat, however, renders the colony lazy; it is even with difficulty that the inhabitants till the soil, whose bosom is a treasure. If, as it is said, this portion of the island was given up to the French in exchange for Cayenne, it would certainly become one of the most important spots of the Antillas.

To effect this, a French fleet is daily expected, equipped with 10,000 men, and commanded by Marshal Suchet; which troops, after becoming accustomed to the climate, would be destined to wage war in the empire of the Haytian republic. I have just seen a very energetic letter from Christophe to Petion, wherein he states, that upon the approach of the common enemy, he hopes that all personal animosities will terminate, and engages to unite his forces with those of his rival. Embarkations take place here every day for the negro emperor and the mulatto president, who send hither for various kinds of merchandize.

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The nephew of general Ferrand, who lived in the same boarding house with myself, proposed an excursion to the *grotto*, which he stated to be a charming spot, and frequented by choice parties. On leaving the city, you almost immediately enter a wood, the leaves of the trees and shrubs composing it, resembling those of the orange and lemon, which are common: they are nearly all like the lily in colour, and a number possess its perfume. These woods are enlivened by beautiful birds, among which are distinguished the fly-bird and paroquet, which, by their warbling, seem desirous of extinguishing the voices of all the others; flying with a rapidity of which I had no prior conception.

We passed by an habitation, where several negroes, singing songs of Congo, were pounding the root of the manioc, from which they make cakes that serve for bread. They worked with unparalleled ardor, and did not seem to perceive the sweat which channelled down their ebony limbs. This root if not undried would be a poison; but as it could not then be scraped, the use of it is not so dangerous as might be imagined. We arrived at the grotto, which appeared to me to be a rock formerly hollowed by the sea. What seems most singular, is an immense excavation nearly circular, which is found in the centre; it is filled with shrubs, and resembles a garden. It is from that spot that you may pass on all sides under vaultings, and between columns, thus penetrating to the interior apartments of this palace of nature. You are doubtless curious to know of what these pillars are formed. It seems as if nature, desirous of repairing her wrongs, after having hollowed this grotto, is determined to fill it. For which purpose, you perceive a liquor filtering from the vaultings, which promptly congeals, thus forming a stalactite, or sugar-loaf reversed. Some drops fall before they congeal and form another cone, which always continues to rise as the other enlarges at the bottom, and in this way they terminate by uniting, forming a column, and as the number daily augments, we may presume, that in process of time the grotto will be closed. This natural architecture, this mass of pillars which, at the first view, appear necessary for the support of the vault, combine to render the sight curious and imposing. Being both provided with lights, we proceeded along several corridors,

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scarcely wide enough at times to admit us, and which on a sudden enlarging, presented to our view immense saloons, which reflecting the gleams of our flambeaux, decorated with a thousand blazing fires the crystal vaultings, of which bats are the only inhabitants, the cold being as piercing as the heat without is excessive.

I often thought of making long excursions in these still savage regions; but when one is habituated to the regularity, I may almost say the cleanliness of our European forests, it is scarcely possible to imagine the difficulties which here present themselves; although frequently varying, they are renewed at every step in these sombre forests, where the hand of man has not yet fashioned the wild exuberance of nature. Sometimes weeds, or running plants, of the ivy or vine species, which twine to the summits of the loftiest trees, falling again to the earth renew Voyages, Vol. V. E 26 their roots, so that in conjunction with the trees that support them, they appear like masts enveloped in cordage. From this you may easily imagine that all the trees are bound as it were together. At other times, plants denominated *raquettes*, the leaves of which are armed with thorns, spread in all directions, much like those of the artichoke, close up the passages, which, notwithstanding the thickness of the forests, might otherwise be found between the trees. It is on this account that all the negroes of the country are armed with a sabre, in order to cut their way through these incommodious plants. The fruits of which you require a description, and whereof I shall now speak, are found in these forests, the pine apple and the banana being alone cultivated.

The tree and the fruit which at first most forcibly strikes the curiosity, and then the sight of the European, are certainly the cocoa-tree and the immense nut which it bears. This tree is of the genus of the palm; it is from forty to fifty feet in height; its roots not very deep, but interwoven; its trunk, nearly straight, is very slender in proportion to its height, but the wood is excellent for carpentering; it terminates in a species of plumage, which produces the most charming effect, as well on account of its form, and yellowish green, which causes it to be distinguished from the dark green of the forests. This plume consists of a bundle of leaves, which, from the perpendicular of the horizon, spreads in every direction;

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they are from ten to twelve feet long, each composed of smaller leaves, all uniting at one common pod. On beholding a branch of the acacia, we may form an idea of these leaves. In the centre appears the yellow flower, to which the nut succeeds, which grows in a mass like close-linked grapes. The covering which environs the fruit serves to make cordage, and the leaves to cover the houses. Placed between a kind of lathes, they form the walls, which are sufficiently strong in a country where the rigors of winter are not experienced; of these they also construct a species of matting, upon which, during the excessive heats, it is more agreeable to sleep than upon a bed; this tree, which is of the greatest utility to man, produces fruit every two or three months.

The palm, nearly as elevated as the cocoa, terminates in the same manner, with a plumage, but differs essentially from it in its trunk, which, on account of its polish, and perfect circular form, and a regular swelling at its base, appears formed in turnery. On beholding this trunk in the midst of the forest, where the other trees leave their branches to chance, it appears like the workmanship of man placed beside that of Nature. Immediately under the leaves, the trunk, which is of a brownish yellow, suddenly becomes green, and from the middle to the summit 27 sprouts a rolled leaf, four or five inches in diameter; it contains a substance which has given it the name of the cabbage-palm; it is white, three lines in thickness, rolled without order, and close knit together. It is excellent to eat, either boiled or as a salad, and in flavour reminds me of the cauliflower; when once the tuft of leaves is cut, the interior of the trunk, which only consists of a number of fibres, immediately rots. Under the rind, however, is found a dark brown wood, eight or nine lines in thickness, and nearly as hard as the *lignum vitæ*; of this the Carribee Indians made their bows, and tipped their arrows. From this you perceive that the tree in question is differently formed from any other that is known to us. The centre is usually harder than the *aubier*, which makes it approximate to the form of vegetables, as well as the banana and latanier, of which I shall now speak; which tree, when springing from the earth, resembles them still more. Another species of the palm, which is called wild, having its trunk armed with prickly points is of no utility whatsoever.

With regard to the banana, it is a vegetable, which, consequently, ought much rather to be enrolled among the class of herbal plants; being about 6 or 8 inches large, it has no wood, and rises from 10 to 12 feet. The leaves are enormous, being 8 feet in length, by two feet and a half wide, and are not, like the two preceding trees, divided into smaller,—nothing but the wind, or their being too full grown, splits them perpendicularly to the stalk. The fruit grows in the centre, resembling a bunch of grapes, which sometimes contains 100 bananas. It terminates in a mass about the size of a man's fist, which opens when the bananas are ripe. This tree is cultivated from slips, of which I have seen two species, the one producing a flowery nutritious fruit; the other, smaller, is fit for the dessert, being sweet and juicy. A kind of tissue, the threads of which run perpendicular to each other, surrounds the leaves of the tree when they bud. From its first springing from the soil, producing fruit, and dying, occupies the lapse of 9 or 10 months.

The American palm, another species of the palm, has the leaves plaited like a fan; of this I have seen various kinds, one of which, only rising a few feet from the ground, is used in the manufacture of very light hats.

The justly merited reputation of the pine-apple, necessarily attracts the traveller's attention; the stalk of this plant in some degree resembles that of the artichoke; and in the same way spreads its long leaves; but they are smooth, of a yellowish green, and rather reddish towards the edges, which are also armed with little points, that are frequently almost imperceptible: from the middle rises a stalk, bearing the pine-apple, being crowned by a 28 tuft of leaves, which, when re-planted in the earth, produces another pine.

Of all the fruits which, in this happy climate, flattered my taste the most, is the *Corossol*, which grows on a very common tree in this country. It is six inches wide, and ten long, being in the form of a heart, the extremity of which is rather bent; it is green, and studded with little points, by no means prickly; the fruit is filled with fibres, which, when lightly pressed, produce a juice partaking equally of sweetness and acidity; something like the orange, but, in my opinion, preferable; it abounds with hard flat grains of the finest black

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colour. This fruit every moment offers to the fatigued traveller a nourishment as refreshing as it is agreeable and wholesome.

A tree, of which I could not taste the fruit, which is directly attached to the trunk, is the *Papayer*, the leaves of which resemble those of the fig. However agreeable those fruits may be of which I have spoken, the Creoles prefer the *Sapotille*; when ripe it is brown on the outside, and within calls to mind the medlar, but it is less nutritious.

I am every moment trampling under foot plants which were unknown to me, and am incessantly stopped by some tree or shrub that arrests my attention. I might mention the indigo, whose leaves, successively placed in three boilers, terminate by depositing a blue matter, which unites in grains; the sablier, as large as our full-grown nut tree, whose trunk is armed with thorns, the base of which is very large and strong, is advantageously appropriated in forming palings to enclose land. The fruit is as large as an orange, rather flattened, and divided into twelve parts, each containing a seed. When ripe it bursts, accompanied by a noise sufficiently loud to astonish the bye-standers, and in some parts of St. Domingo, at particular periods, this report continues almost without interruption. The noise which it produces has given it the appellation of the Devil's tree.

The *Palma christi* abounds at St. Thomas's and St. Domingo, it rises to a considerable height, its stalks are channelled, and from the grain is extracted oil for burning. In fine, must I speak of that plant which has already, for so many years, furnished our poets with a thousand comparisons, I mean the sensitive plant? It would be requisite never to have heard of this plant to enjoy the wonder which is caused by the instantaneous contraction of leaves, which, upon your retiring, re-assume their natural position.

The island of St. Domingo, and particularly that part in possession of the Spaniards, has gold mines, which are no longer worked; it is even stated that they are lost: they might, however, easily be found, since upon the banks of some rivers negroes are occupied in collecting the gold-dust.

The centre of the island being occupied by mountains, which in all directions descend to the sea, in hills, or verdant plots, called *Mornes* , it may be conceived that there are many rivers. The Ozama, upon the right bank of which St. Domingo is situated, is large and deep; the whole island is naturally divided into three parts, by the mountains; a circumstance which greatly tends to diminish any apprehensions from the Negroes and the Mulattos.

I have for some days thought of quitting St. Domingo, but nearly all the vessels which were in port having come for mahogany, either sailed for the United States of the North, or else to Europe; there was but one bound for Jamaica, and although it leaked a good deal, and had the reputation of being in very bad condition, I notwithstanding made up my mind to sail in her.

I am, &c. &c.

#### **LETTER IX.**

*Port Royal, Jamaica , 5 th March , 1817.*

As the ship in which I was to sail was to be laden with mahogany, near Nissas, I rejoined her some days after she had sailed from St. Domingo, and for this purpose we proceeded in a small boat, and soon lost sight of the mouth of the river, the signal tower, and the dwelling, said to be that of Columbus, the first European edifice erected on the soil of America. Constructed of huge masses of stone, it was probably designed to serve as a defence against the unfortunate Indians, then inhabiting the country, of whom scarcely a trace is now remaining. We had fine weather, but in these latitudes (we were 18 degrees north) a continuation of it was hardly to be expected; and in effect, that which had accompanied us from port speedily changed; it became dreadful, but the banks being in all directions ruggedly perpendicular, we could not stop our course. We passed over

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some rocks almost level with the current's surface, the sight of which made our mariners tremble; but they resisted every effort of the waves, when we found ourselves in a bay, on the banks of which we resolved to pass the night. Scarcely had we set foot to ground, when a cloud of musquitos assailed us, driving us back to our boat, in which we slept, near the bank; and in the morning we perceived our vessel making sail for the bay of Ocao, in order to take in a stock of cattle.

These seas abound with pirates: on the first day we saw a large decked boat, and a fast sailer, which passed near us, in a 30 contrary direction, no doubt for the purpose of examining us, for shortly after she tacked about, and made towards us. As she gained fast upon us, our captain tacked, crying, "It is long since my cannon has been tried, (for we had one,) and I will this day try it:" upon which he charged with powder, and fired, then charged again with ball, preparing to fire upon the pirate, should he dare advance. Being at a distance, and perceiving that we did not fly, he thought us well prepared for action, and on hearing the cannon, gained the coast, hoisting the flag of Petion. Having lowered the boat, he was towed towards the sand, whither we could not, neither had we the wish to follow. Two Spaniards whom they had freed, joined us at Ocao, from whom we learned, that our cannon had excited great fears in the pirates, who, however numerous were only armed with muskets.

These freebooters are of all nations, some even have left the interior of Europe, to commit piracies in the gulf of Mexico; the greater part belonging to the Spanish Independents of South America. They are called Carthaginians, though Carthagera is under the dominion of the king of Spain. The Spanish Royalists scarcely dare leave their ports, so much do they stand in fear of them; the Americans are on pretty good terms with them, but the English hang them. Four of them, after the wreck of their vessel, being so imprudent as to enter Kingston, in order to ascertain the departure and destination of ships well laden, were stopped and imprisoned, and will probably pay with their lives for their plunder, and that of their messmates.

We soon arrived at the bay of Ocao, to take in 65 oxen; these animals, after castration, live so freely in the woods, that they soon become savage, and are not caught again without difficulty. It is curious enough to see these poor animals fastened by the horns, and thus secured upon the deck, where they are stowed in such a close manner as to be unable to lie down. They cost about a dubloon each, or £3 7 s. per head, and are usually sold for three times that sum at Jamaica. Having frequently heard of Ocao bay, I thought to have found some habitations on shore, but it is so desert, that whenever I think of a savage country, the present will always occur to my recollection. The Spanish house of M. Francisquez Perez, to whom all the environs belong, is situated at some distance in the mountain. The picturesque valley of Ocao bay is a sand-bank, which appears almost moving, although covered with lataniers, larger and more elevated than those I had previously seen. This tree is topped by a tuft of leaves, larger than an umbrella in dimensions, which they resemble in form, if we suppose it plaited from the centre to the circumference. These leaves, regarded upon the tree, do not appear large; I however took off some, and found them six feet. in diameter. 31 It seems they die every year, or oftener, so that at the trunk of a tree a kind of hut is formed, which completely screens from the sun and the rain. The paroquets are fond of the fruit of this tree, which has not much root; from its abounding on so bad a soil as that of Ocao, we may justly imagine that it was one of the first employed by nature, to form, with its remains, a vegetable strata of earth, upon the sands which the sea had abandoned. During the two days that we remained, I killed paroquets, as noisy here as elsewhere, wild pigeons, and a black bird very much resembling our crows. Having wounded one, my dog brought it to me, but it cried and croaked so loud, that a flock of its companions assembled around me. I once more charged, when two or three that I brought down filled the valley with their screams; the rest of the flock answering and approaching so near me, that I may truly say I was attacked by them. Before we sailed at night, we set fire to this curious wood, which was productive of no injury, and afforded us a magnificent spectacle from the sea.

It was a delightful night when we left Ocao bay, and in the morning we came in sight of *Cape Tiburon*, that is to say, the western extremity of the Island of St. Domingo, dependent on the Haytian Republic, of which Petion is President. At night we were becalmed for six hours, when the captain having gone aloft, informed us, that we had no need to pray for a wind, as he was much mistaken if a tempest was not very near at hand. He was perfectly right in this conjecture, the sea soon became tempestuous, the north wind blew violently, and the most terrific night then followed. I hitherto conceived that I had witnessed a hurricane, but from what occurred, I found that I had as yet seen nothing. The night was cloudless, during a part of which the moon shone; the vessel, under water, manœuvred over each wave, and the steerage was only confided to certain seamen; indeed the danger was so eminent, that they did not conceal it from each other; nevertheless, I perceived, that however perils may oppress, the certainty gives birth to sensations far removed from fear. The sun only shone forth to present to us a sea whose furious and whitened billows threatened every instant to plunge our vessel in the profound abyss of this terrific element. At mid-day, when we had not perceived a sail, we suddenly beheld close to us a galiot, but the mist from the surges prevented our perfectly distinguishing it; and we afterwards sought it in vain. Towards night we beheld an English frigate; but it was far distant, and at the cape, which we could not make, being short of provisions, and filling with water. The pumps, though continually worked, were not capable of clearing the hold: the waves rose half-mast high, and one carried away, in the morning, an 32 ox and a sheep, which only proved a prelude to further disasters, and for a moment I was afraid the captain would lose his senses. "It is horrible," said he, addressing me; "never did I before find myself in a similar situation; and after such a tempest, if you regain your country, I advise you never again to trust yourself on ship-board." He then left me, to go on deck, I being in bed, which was the only dry spot; in a moment after I felt a dreadful shock, accompanied by a hollow sound, which spread through the vessel; it was a most enormous wave, which, after dashing against our bark, fell amidst the sails, and capsized us. I immediately sprang upon deck, where all the crew, clinging in different directions, crowded near the captain. The vessel, upon her beam-ends, was no longer governable;

but the captain, in this horrible dilemma, preserving all his presence of mind, demanded if any one would go and take in a reef, and clear the brigantine? Two Scotchmen sprung upon the boom, when the water contained in the long-boat, and which kept us down, having run off, the vessel righted, and began again to wear. I will not attempt to describe the radiance of joy which at that instant illumined every countenance; an hour after we perceived the land, which restored speech to every one; it was Cape *Morand*, the eastern extremity of Jamaica. As soon as we had weathered this point, the sea became less tempestuous, and we were sheltered from the wind by the lofty mountains of the island; night, however, prevented our making the port of Kingston; we therefore hauled to, and in the morning found ourselves in nearly the same situation. We took advantage of this moment to light a fire, which for two days we had not been able to do; when, with some squares of portable soup, which I boiled, together with some eggs that were still left, we appeased our hunger, which began to be pressing. Of the 65 oxen taken on board, only 20 remained; the others being dead, or carried away by the storm, when they were doubtless soon devoured by the sharks, which continued to follow us during the tempest, as if certain of some destined prey.

The following morning a boat brought us a pilot, to whom a curious circumstance occurred; there were three in this pirogue, or hollowed trunk of a tree, after the manner of the savages, which carried a sail, when, I know not by what mischance or imprudence, they upset; their embarrassment was ludicrous enough, particularly that of the pilot, who, being no expert swimmer, strove to get upon his upset bark. His colour being a clear yellow, gave him, in the water, the appearance of a large fish; the two others, swimming round, and trying to turn the boat, prevented his mounting. We put an end to this skirmishing between them, by lowering our boat, and shortly afterwards we perceived a pinnacle making towards us, and we hove to. A welldressed person, but upon whose figure the traces of melancholy were perceptible, came on board; it was the captain of a threemast vessel, belonging to the same owners as our ship, who, the preceding night, had been wrecked on the rock of Cape Morand, near which we had passed, without, however,

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having perceived them. The crew and himself escaped in the long-boat, and in hopes of securing some of the wreck, he was going to visit the coast. His narrative afflicted us; we left him, sincerely commiserating his misfortune, and, pursuing our course, soon beheld the vast bay, at the extremity of which is situated Kingston, the most considerable town in Jamaica. The entrance is defended by reefs of rocks, rising to the water's surface, and by *Port Royal*, near which is a town built upon a sand-bank, scarcely rising above the ocean. It formerly stood more to the West, and was submerged; when being rebuilt to the East, it was destroyed by fire four years ago. I am not aware what element is preparing to wage a third war against it, but the inhabitants do not think themselves in safety; it is well fortified, and above the battery, level with the waves, are two ranges of cannon.

On visiting the fort I saw 22 pieces of the most beautiful calibre, which I recognised for French, a circumstance not very flattering to my feelings. The fort is about two leagues from Kingston, where merchant vessels alone can enter; the ships of war and frigates riding at *Port Royal*. There were five, one of which, a two-decker, was the admiral's ship of the Blue. I was shown a frigate, formerly taken from the French, called the *Active*, which is esteemed one of the best sailors in the English service. The British are very partial to our mode of building, a circumstance which they have too frequently given us cause to remember.

I am, &c. &c.

### LETTER X.

*Kingston, 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1817.*

It was with difficulty I established myself in this city; indeed it appears that the English, so fond of freedom, seem anxious to keep it to themselves. You cannot conceive the trouble I had to gain a permission of residence. My passport was insufficient, letters of recommendation were necessary; and the offer of depositing 6 or 7000 francs, near 300 *l.*, which I had with me, was not deemed equivalent. Mr. James Bruce, who accompanied

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Voyages, Vol. V. F 34 me, having spoken to some merchants, they became bound for me; and by this means I had at length a permit to reside at Jamaica.

Kingston is not the capital of the island, but the most considerable town; its streets in direct lines traverse each other at right angles, and are not paved. A covered gallery, supported by wooden pillars, ornaments the façade of most of the houses. The warehouses of the opulent merchants are in the centre, facing the port; and their mansions at the extremity of the town. The exterior of these edifices are decorated with trees, whose shade diminishes the sun's burning heat; the front being usually covered with Venetian blinds, painted green, harmonizes perfectly with the foliage; while the body of the edifice, usually built of brick, or of wood, is tastefully painted, and so disposed as to leave a free circulation of air.

A spacious and elegant tavern particularly struck us; nor did any one ever boast better *Cooks*; we commanded dinner, and were perfectly well served. When we wished to discharge our reckoning, an honest fat English captain, hearing us talk aloud in French, conceived that they wanted to impose upon us as strangers; upon which, coming up, he began to take our parts, swearing lustily. He stated that he had been too well treated when prisoner in France, to suffer any Frenchman, in his country, to be cheated, and entered into a long discussion with the servant of the house, in spite of all he said, added to our expostulations, which he would not hear, so much was he hurried away by his generous enthusiasm; and he terminated by threatening him with a caning, shaking the stick at the same time before his face. On witnessing this, our master waiter flew out in a rage, and soon returned, presenting the captain with a challenge to meet him under the great cocoa-trees. At this, our brave defender, bursting into a loud fit of laughter, required of the company if he could, with any decency, fight with a mulatto? This word surprised every one, and the waiter, who passed for a white, began to balance; his look of defiance changed; and his genealogy, which the captain proceeded to narrate, completely disconcerted him, so that he slunk away without uttering another syllable.

This adventure having detained us late, and caused our drinking more Madeira than was prudent, we were much embarrassed how to find a lodging. We however applied at a house which was indicated, when Mr. Bruce, reeling towards the master, a tall serious looking man, who regarded us attentively, he demanded whether we could eat at his house? "Yes, Sir," replied he, "and drink as well." "Such being the case, we shall remain with you, Sir," was the reply.

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Our host, who was formerly of the colony of St. Domingo, demanded 12 francs, or 10 shillings per day, for which we were well treated; his mansion being rendered the more agreeable to us, from being a species of coffee-house, where several Frenchmen, established at Kingston, usually assembled every evening.

The surrounding country is not very agreeable, being but a sand-bank, very recently appearing above the water's surface, which gradually recedes from its ancient strand; on which account there is very little vegetation. Notwithstanding, every thing in the power of art is done; and the country residences of the merchants, called *Penns*, are extremely agreeable. These do not constitute the plantations, which are farther removed to the foot of the mountain, where the descending currents of water continually draw down excellent earth. One mile from the town is the camp, containing two infantry regiments, one English, the other of blacks, both well disciplined. This camp is formed after the plan of those in Europe, but in lieu of tents, or huts, houses have been constructed for the soldiers, as commodious as elegant. The kitchens are behind, and removed from the rest of the building, while an aqueduct distributes the water every where; in short, it is not only the finest establishment to be seen in the colonies, but one of those where a great expenditure has been most usefully appropriated.

Among the persons who frequented our boarding-house every evening, was M. Chasseriau, a gentleman of infinite talent, who was under Buonaparte in the campaign of Egypt; he had been the secretary to general Ferrand at St. Domingo, and recently one

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of the principal members of the independent government of Carthagena, and when the Spanish royalists entered that important city, he took refuge at Jamaica. It appeared to me, that his ambitious views still direct him towards the same spot. He is a good speaker, though his delivery is slow, like that of most orators; he was particularly friendly towards us, and he joins to an agreeable exterior, those qualities that have insured him a good wife, while his three children deserve all the love which is bestowed upon them by their parents. Though the fortune of M. Chasseriau is not so considerable as it was, he received us with all that polished ease which is known but to those accustomed to refined society. M. *Chaplain*, of Tours, whom we met, and who lost a beautiful estate in this country, is much indebted to the friendship of M. Chasseriau, yet still possesses all his natural gaiety, in despite of the frowns of fortune. To this gentleman I owe much information with regard to the country, for the colonist, like the European farmer, or the Parisian, remains amidst the most curious objects without being sensible of it. He told me among other things, what where the maroon negroes, of whom 36 I had heard talk. These men, preferring a savage and errant life to slavery, have retired to the interior of the island, in the heart of the Blue Mountains. so called from their colour, which gives them an appearance of great elevation. In these inaccessible fastnesses, they have returned to a mode of living most resembling that of nature. The female, armed with bow and arrows, usually kills the fish and game, which the male fetches swimming, or at the chase; you may well imagine that the English government, desirous of destroying so dangerous an horde in a colony so populous, rich, and extensive, and for the most part peopled by negroes, dispatched troops against them. They, however, not only defended themselves with that courage so conspicuous among the inhabitants of mountainous regions, but to such advantage that a treaty was concluded, whereby a portion of territory was secured to them in perpetuity on the one hand; while on the other, they engaged to send back to the English all the negro slaves who desert, and fly to them for refuge. This treaty, up to the present period, has been religiously kept; but it is not difficult to perceive how much this example is to be dreaded, and that upon the first general revolt, the rebels will take advantage of this sanctuary.

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I believe, and it is the opinion of most of the colonists, that the period of the emancipation of the negroes in all the colonies, is not very remote; the English themselves are in favour of such a movement; several reasons concurring to make them adopt such a singular policy; all the European nations losing their colonies, will be forced to have recourse to them for superfluities perhaps; but which long custom have rendered necessary; and their possessions in the East will amply remunerate them for the loss of their American islands. These possessions falling into the hands of the negroes who, lazy by nature, will become doubly so after so long a period of slavery, will produce little more than what is necessary for home consumption; thus, for a length of time, the negroes will be compelled to have recourse to the English for the produce of their manufactures, because the United States, though not so removed, are not yet sufficiently advanced in that branch of commerce. This necessity will give a kind of preponderance in favour of the British throughout the islands, of which they will profit to form an alliance against these very United States. You will attach whatever importance you think fit to this assertion, one thing, however, is certain, that the English are very capable of this from their inherent national spirit. The more I see, the more am I persuaded, that the spirit of traffic with the individual, and ambition in the government, rise paramount to every other consideration.

In our boarding-house is a very taciturn Frenchman, whom 37 it is impossible to awaken from his lethargy, but by conversing upon oxen and hogs, his branch of commerce. One day, however, having mentioned *Mons*, he enquired with eagerness whether I was a native of that city? Upon answering in the affirmative, his countenance underwent an immediate change. "Then," said he, "we are from the same country," and shaking me by the hand, "I am from *Mortagne*, where I had a printing office in 1814, but being the first who published Carnot's memoir, I was arrested, judged, and sentenced to six years imprisonment, of which I had suffered some months, when upon the return of Napoleon, in 1815, I was released; but on the second restoration of the king I fled, since which period I have lived by every species of commerce." The situation of my fellow countryman interests me; that which seems to affect him most is, the having brought on the misfortunes of his

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family by his own imprudence. He is on the point of sailing for Port au Prince, the capital of Petion, and has proposed to take me on board his vessel. I hesitated a little, but the news of the President's illness, the arrival of a French squadron, united to the entreaties of M. Jaques prevailed, and I determined not to go. In fact, at this juncture, the demise of Petion, or the disembarking of a French force, would necessarily bring on the assassination of all the French established in the Haytian republic.

I am, &c.

### LETTER XI.

*Kingston, 22 d March, 1817.*

Since my last I took a walk into the mountains, which I shall now describe. A vehicle first conducted us to an inn, at which spot the road is impassable for carriages, and from thence we set forward on foot, in suffocating weather; but M. Jaques felt in honour bound to follow me, and heaven knows if we gained or not, the bad dinner which awaited us! We traversed vast torrents nearly dried up; in the valleys we here and there desiered houses, which were almost uniformly inhabited by French. The negro men and women on foot or horseback, either descending or mounting, sang while proceeding along the circuitous paths of the mountains, giving a picturesque and theatric appearance to the scenery, which varied at every turning.

These mountains are thickly scattered with aloes, whose yellow flowers falling in all directions, look beautiful upon the dark 38 green soil; it is this plant which is stated to bloom but once in a century; it is composed of a stalk twenty-five feet high, having twenty-eight to thirty branches, being smaller in proportion, as they are elevated from the base. Having made enquiry relative to the time and epoch of its flowering, the natives informed me, it was uncommon, and that before they were at all aware, the stalk on a sudden burst from the leaves forming the foot. Having climbed a rock of a greyish colour, and not very hard, we placed our feet and hands upon a species of plant, each branch having

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the form, and being armed with points similar to a large caterpillar, which points piercing our gloves and clothes, caused us dreadful pain. We went forward cursing our lot, and much embarrassed, when we beheld a fountain full of fresh and limpid water, and, having stripped, we plunged in. This piece of water furnishes an aqueduct, which transports it to a distant sugarmanufactory, and though formed with solidity, seems only raised there to show the weakness of our powers, when opposed to the vigorous efforts of nature, which having covered it with verdure and plants, appears to have rendered it her own. Having walked from four to five leagues, we returned to the inn, where we had left our conveyance; it is kept by a Frenchman, but he was gone to the town, and I was sorry at not being able to see him, as he might have furnished me with interesting communications respecting the mountains, which we had but very imperfectly visited. We repaired from thence to the sugar manufactory; which ere I describe, it may not be amiss to give you some idea of the sugar-cane; it is a kind of large reed, an inch and a half in diameter, having regular knots, three or four inches apart; from these knots spring the leaves, three or four feet in length, the whole extent of the plant measuring from six to seven feet; from being at first green, it changes when ripening, to a yellow-green, and is very heavy. In this state, the inhabitants, and the negroes in particular, eat of it in great quantities; it pushes a stalk from seven to eight feet high, crowned by a white silky flower, which appears but once upon the same stem. This being cut will produce for three or four years in succession. In order to plant the cane, the extremity is alone taken, which is buried in the ground eight feet deep, in ruts which are formed about three feet apart. When covered up, the whole process is finished, and ten days after, springs up from each knot, a small stalk producing a new cane, which, in Jamaica, yields at the expiration of ten or eleven months. In proportion as the cane ripens, its leaves dry and fall; I believe they are also gathered. Eaten at its maturity it is agreeable enough, if not too sweet, you press it between the teeth and the sugar comes out in strings. The manufactory of which I shall speak, occupies a considerable space in a hollow at the base of the mountains. The huts of the negroes are concealed in a charming shrubbery formed of beautiful trees of the country, such as the cocoa, palm, banana, &c.: a negro stood sentry at the door, to prevent the entrance

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of any one with fire, which might be productive of very serious injury during the period of the cane ripening. The first process is cutting them, stripping off the leaves, and conveying them to the mill. Here three cylinders are worked by means of water, and an indented wheel turns all the three together; the left and right in the same direction, that in the middle moving contrarywise. The left opening, or the distance from one cylinder to the other, is larger than the right; so that the cane inserted on the left side, impelled by a leaden lining which is behind, protrudes it at the right side, experiencing a second and more powerful pressure. The sugar then runs into boilers seven or eight feet in diameter, when it is instantly put into a boiling state; and when skimmed, poured off into large wooden bowls, where it is left to dry. All that coagulates is placed in casks, from whence it drips for some time, and the sugar, though unrefined, is thus forwarded to Europe, where it undergoes the conclusive process. For the distilling of rum, the skimmings of the sugar are collected, together with all that comes from the several operations, when the whole being distilled in an immense alembic, thus is produced the celebrated Jamaica rum, of which there are two qualities, according to the ingredients which are put into a state of fermentation. Perfectly satisfied with our excursion, we took the route to the city, and we decided, the following day, on going to *Spanish Town*, the capital of the island, and the residence of the governor, being about fifteen miles from Kingston.

Notwithstanding the repugnance of our horse to perform this journey, having fed him three times on the route, we gained in safety Spanish Town. This place is by no means so handsome as Kingston, the streets are not straight, nor have they the air of cleanliness and taste so conspicuous in the latter. Its situation in the interior was probably the reason of its being made the seat of government. At the time the Spaniards possessed it, Saint Jago was its appellation, and it might then have been larger than Kingston, which indeed appears almost entirely of English fashion. The only remarkable object pointed out, was the statue of Rodney, which is of marble, and was transported from London; however handsome, it has nothing very extraordinary to boast; and being placed under a kind of vaulting, which appears to have been originally intended for a different purpose, you

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are thus debarred from inspecting it in its real point of view; besides, it appears to me to possess the defect applicable to many other statues: the costume is in the Roman style, which divests the monument of every thing historical, by not fixing a decided epoch.

Our curiosity was little gratified with the inspection of this capital, yet upon leaving it we were pleased with a small iron bridge, boldly situated over a torrent, which must be tremendous in the rainy season. In our way thither we had observed a tree of immense dimensions, and on our return we measured it, and found it to be 45 feet in circumference, at an elevation of 4 feet from the ground. A regiment of cavalry might easily be sheltered under its branches; it was a wild cotton-tree, which, when in its most flourishing condition, covers all the surrounding soil with a white and cottony flower. Its trunk is remarkable for being formed of huge sides, which only assume a round or cylindrical shape at a certain height from the ground.

I had already been three weeks at Kingston, and no vessel was announced as proceeding to New Orleans. As the Americans cannot enter the British colonies, it is, of course, more difficult to get a passage to a port of the United States. As the bad season was fast advancing, I knew not how to act, when one morning M. Chasseriau came to acquaint me that an English vessel, the *Coquette*, just arrived from England, was immediately to set sail for New Orleans. Accordingly, accompanied by M. Jacques, we waited upon the proprietors, Messrs. Denison and Schwitz, who had so kindly been bound for me on landing. From these gentlemen I secured a passage for New Orleans, or the Havannah, without, however, precisely specifying for which of these two ports. As this was indifferent to me, I accepted the alternative, and prepared for my departure.

I had still an opportunity of taking some walks with my companion, during which I inspected the coffee and tobacco plants, the former is about as large as a Spanish genet, whose green glossy leaves, which are two feet wide, and four in length, last during the year; the trunk is from one to two feet large, and the flower monopetalous; from the centre issues a pistil, which gives birth to a reddish brown fruit, the size of a small nut, which

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contains two smooth grains, closely united. This is what we term coffee in the grain. The coffee-plant comes from seed, and in Jamaica it is generally found in elevated sandy soils, where rain frequently falls, and which are almost uniformly surrounded by fogs.

Tobacco, whose varied uses is become so universal, is of various kinds; that which I have seen in the colonies does not exactly resemble that of France and Germany. It grows four feet high; the leaf is immediately attached to the stalk, and its flower, of a red colour, is very agreeable; this is a branch of commerce very lucrative for certain colonies, such as the Havannah, &c.

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I did not remain long enough in the islands to ascertain all the plants and fruits which are spoken of in Europe; I do not, however, think them more savoury than our own. When we see upon the table some fruits so well known to us, such as the grape, apples, strawberries, &c., we forget those of the country. To this you will probably oppose the pleasure of novelty, so natural in all things, to fragile humanity. There is, besides, an objection to these fruits, which is, their not being good, except fasting. After the Banana, which I regard as one of the best, if you drink a glass of strong liquor, it is productive, according to report, of a fermentation in the stomach, sometimes attended with danger. The best mode of familiarizing one's self with the Islands, consists in partaking of all these fruits, as the negroes do, in the morning, and then taking hard exercise, which, by means of perspiration, causes a diminution of that mass of blood which we bring with us from Europe. This idea is relative to the commencement of those disorders which are usually experienced by Europeans on arriving in these climates. The blood of a man residing in a cold climate, being condensed, his vessels are capable of containing a great quantity of this fluid; but all is in equilibrium with the density of the atmosphere, and the individual enjoys good health. Arrived at St. Domingo, Jamaica, or any other colony of the torrid zone, his blood dilates, the vessels are stuffed, and he experiences the most excruciating head-aches; wherefore, if he does not immediately diminish the mass of blood, he soon becomes subject to the most dangerous disorders. However frequent and continual the

exercise which I pursue in the colonies, I am scarcely ever without pains in the head, to which I was never before subject; it is true, I had frequent bleedings at the nose, which have ceased since my residence in the Islands.

The English are very careful of their health at Jamaica. They only go out at half past five in the morning, either in a carriage, or on horseback, accompanied by their wives, who are very richly attired; and they return home as soon as the sun appears above the mountains. On quitting the house they take a cup of black coffee, and on their return they find milk-coffee, with bread and butter, which constitutes the first breakfast; this generally takes place at the warehouse, as every one is in trade. After this they visit the tavern, where a beef-steak, potatoes, and beer constitute the second breakfast, which suffices until the hour of dinner, when, forgetting every idea of sobriety, they partake of different liquors; and about nine o'clock tea is served. However sumptuous the repast, the Englishman is not to be blamed for a want of simplicity in his diet, his dishes being plain, and ragouts unknown to him. *Voyages, Vol. V. G*

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### LETTER XII.

*Kingston, April 1 st, 1817.*

M. Chapelain, of whom I have before spoken, had several curious objects which he showed me; among others, a bow of the savages of South America, five feet and a half long, two inches wide, and four lines thick, made of the exterior wood of the palm-tree; it is extremely hard. The arrows, made of reeds, without any feathers to direct them, are tipped with pieces of the same wood, zigzagged like a saw. This bow causes the arrows to fly with such velocity, that, notwithstanding their lightness, they will perforate a plank one inch thick. He showed me, besides, cocoa shells chiselled with infinite taste, by the Americans and natives of America; as well as calabashes painted with infinite care. This tree is of the middling size, without leaves as I beheld them. From the trunk and branches springs

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a fruit of the pumkin kind, whose rind, more oily and tender, is not so brittle as the latter; I did not dare propose to M. Chapelain to favour me with these specimens, as I perceived that he valued them; nevertheless, his civility would have prompted him to insist upon my accepting them for nothing. He also possessed some instruments formed of *lignum vitæ*. I saw in Spanish Town a post made of this wood, being black, and slightly veined with yellow, which resounded like metal; it is harder and heavier than the box, but its pores and veins are more regularly arranged than those of the latter.

The island of Jamaica was discovered by Columbus in 1494, whom a portion of its present inhabitants may regard as their father. Distant about 130 leagues from the continent, it is only 20 from St. Domingo, and in the 17–40 degrees of latitude, being of an oval form, 20 leagues wide, and 50 long. The blue mountains which extend from east to west divide it in two parts, each being fertile in colonial produce. Admiral Penn, seconded by a band of freebooters, took it from the Spaniards in 1655, and in the hands of the English it is become one of the finest European colonies. Its actual possessors being only occupied with commerce, the Spaniards or French are usually at the heads of houses, and sell their products to the English, who send to fetch them. It is observable, that the English are never in immediate contact with the negroes: therefore, in case of revolt, they would have nothing to fear, and would have time for embarkation with the bulk of their riches.

Extravagance is carried to a great extent at Kingston; the 43 carriages are elegant, and the horses, which are transported from England or America, are generally very handsome. When a merchant quits his warehouse, he usually leaves only a large dog, which he sometimes purchases as high as 40 *l.* or 50 *l.*

One thing which particularly strikes the stranger, is to see in the streets of Kingston a quantity of large birds formed like the vulture, and having the necks bare like those of that bird. In a few minutes they unite on the carrion of animals, such as goats, hogs, &c., which are left to their mercy, and disappear in a short space of time. This creature is so fearless,

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that my dog, on the first day, stopping before them, seemed by his enquiring look to ask of me whether they were domestic or savage.

The whole population of Jamaica consists of 200,000 souls, of whom the half at least is of colour. You desired me in the letter which I received at St. Thomas's to examine attentively the negroes and mulattos, and give you a just detail of my observations upon that head. I will now endeavour to satisfy you; but perhaps what I shall state will appear to you too systematical, or only a dream of my own imagination; be this as it may, I shall submit it for your judgment.

If there were not a number of free negroes, it would perhaps be difficult to ascertain their primitive and predominant character. They appear to me kind, generous, and open-hearted; but the most cruel slavery has, in some measure, changed these valuable qualities; it is in Africa, his native country, that the negro must be appreciated; in the midst of his occupations, surrounded by his fondest affections; he should be seen in the heart of his family, at the moment of that separation which must be agonizing: and if we form our opinion from the attachment which the black contracts towards his master, when he happens to possess humanity, as well as from the fond recollection always cherished for the name of Africa, which he never repeats without sensations of delight, we must allow him endowed with all the finer touches of the soul.

The negro is in general much stronger and better formed than us, and it is seldom that any lame are found among them. This I attribute to the facility the women find in bringing forth their offspring, which is the case in all hot climates, where childbirth is unaccompanied by pain. The negro is agile, expert, and possessed of a conception applicable to all kinds of things. The creoles confess that their children are not superior to the infantile negroes when they study together; but the period soon arrives when the latter are able to work, at which epoch they are overburthened: they groan in silence; they forget what they have acquired; and their fellow-students, who daily gain an ascendancy over them, rather regard them in the light of other creatures, and use them as beasts of burthen. The

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negresses are well proportioned, active, erect, healthful, and cherish their children. Their features, it is true, are not prepossessing in our eyes: but does not each of their senses perfectly fulfil its functions? What is more healthful, robust, and hardy, than this class of men?

When Buffon sought in each species of the animal its primitive race, no one contradicted him; and we look upon the shepherd's dog as that from which the successive gradations took place, to all those varieties which we know, because the shepherd's dog has properties that are applicable to all; he is generally more nimble, nervous, intelligent, and faithful, than any other; and I might say equally as much for the Arabian horse. Nature, which circumscribes in certain latitudes and climates, the different species of animals, may she not equally have assigned a place to ours? and from the moment that we quitted it, may we not also have degenerated?

The surface of Africa proves in every direction that it has long remained above the waters. Its population, still little known, frequently leads us to perceive, although coupled with the most disgusting barbarism, the traces of a very remote civilization. May not Africa have been the grand reservoir, the very centre from whence has issued different colonies, which by degrees have changed; was not the Egyptian army composed of blacks? We are told by Herodotus, that the natives of Colchis, a colony of that army in Asia Minor, still preserved some traits of the Africans, from whence we may infer that they had worn off. But you will reply, that negroes living in northern countries for a length of time, do not change. Does our transient state of being permit us to calculate the grand epochs of nature? We have seen civilization march like the sun, from east to west; and who can say whether the population has not more than once performed the circle of the globe, and whether the white is not the traveller, whom the climates have successively changed; while the negro, having remained stationary, has undergone no transformation? During the rest of my voyage, I hope I shall frequently have occasion to make remarks to come in support of what I now state. Does not Providence already seem to punish the white for the slavery to which he has subjected the negro? If we take things upon the aggregate, we have only

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removed the latter from a sandy country, and generally unfruitful, to transport them to the same latitudes, but upon soils capable of answering to their exertions.

You will object, I know, that Africa has several species of negroes, and that some do not unite all the advantages of which I have spoken; but did I not also argue that the whole of Africa was comprised in the zone assigned to the human species?

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I am on board the *Coquette*, a beautiful English brig, French built, in front of Port Royal; I close my communications: we are on the point of sailing, and M. Jaques, who returns in the boat, is the bearer of this letter.

I am, &c.

### LETTER XIII.

*New Orleans, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1817.*

When we set sail I informed you I did not know whether it was for the Havannah, or New Orleans; as soon as we were at sea, the captain informed me it was for the latter place, and that if his destination was not announced, the reason was his being freighted with piastres, and that many persons, not to be depended upon, were desirous of going. After calms and varying winds, we at length had a fine breeze to the south-east, and we weathered Cape St. Anthony, the extremest western point of the isle of Cuba, on the 8th of April. We then entered the Gulf of Mexico, between Yucatan and Florida, where the storms are as violent as they are common. The same night we were visited by one of these, during which wind, rain, thunder and lightning, seemed to dispute the aerial empire. This lasted during the night, and we performed four leagues an hour.

I had every reason to feel satisfied with the gentlemanly conduct of Captain Newland, but he could only converse in English, a circumstance that made our intercourse very laconic.

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In passing the isle of Cuba, we received a small passenger about the size of a thrush, which probably found itself fatigued, and could not regain the land. It familiarized itself to such a point, as to cat off the table, and perched without fear upon my head or hand. I imagined that I had cultivated its friendship; but immediately the shores of Louisiana appeared, it preferred liberty, and quitted us immediately.

On the morning of the 16th of April, we entered the Mississippi with some difficulty, for the vessel drew thirteen feet water, and here the river was only twelve feet deep: we were stationary for some minutes, our situation being the more disagreeable in consequence of several rocks which appeared above the water, at about a hundred paces from the ship. Aided by some manœuvres, and a side wind, we were soon in deep water; the river has here five mouths, or passes, and we had taken that to the southeast. I felt a certain degree of pleasure on once more beholding the soil of the United States. I returned by Louisiana, one of the most beautiful and fertile countries in the world, of which Ferdinand de Sotro was the first discoverer. Despairing to find the mouths of the Mississippi, he traversed the immense tract of country which extends from Florida to this stream, which he then descended. The Spaniards, who then rather sought mines of gold and silver, than a fertile soil, although requiring cultivation, reaped no benefit from this discovery. In 1720, the French who had long been established in Canada, and who navigated the Ohio, and Mississippi, descended the stream to its mouth; when they perceived that there did not perhaps exist a country so advantageously situated as Louisiana, for the purposes of commerce. In consequence of this, it was determined that a grand establishment should be formed; and a city, to which the name of New Orleans was given, arose upon the left bank of the river, at which period the duke of Orleans was Regent. To this spot, criminals and indigent persons repaired, who continued for a length of time the sole inhabitants of Louisiana, and in 1776, France ceded this colony to the Spaniards. The unaccountable conduct of these two powers kept Louisiana for a length of time in the most dangerous state of fermentation, more fatiguing, perhaps, than a revolution, for the inhabitants. At one time, an idea was formed of abandoning the colony, and crossing to the right bank of

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the stream; but every thing became tranquil, and the Spaniards gained entire mastership in 1769, from which period it remained peaceably in their possession, until the era of its restoration to France. The Emperor Napoleon knowing that the maritime superiority of the English could always prevent us from enjoying our colonies, sold it in 1803, to the United States; so that Louisiana, the capital of which is New Orleans, and contains about 40,000 French, is actually become one of the Union States. The laws of the United States only extend to a certain portion of the population: a vast country may demand its independence, and from that period Louisiana has increased daily, and is no longer recognizable by those who have not seen it for the last fifteen years.

We navigated the Mississippi, so justly famous, whose course running upwards of 1000 leagues, is still one of the most rapid currents known; like other rivers it does not empty itself into a gulf, or bay, but into a gulf formed by the mud which it incessantly supplies, and it is also the only stream that, like the Ganges and the Rhone, runs for a length of time from North to South.

The sea is yellow, and filled with the trunks of trees for more than thirty miles from its mouth; it would be impossible to enter the river without a pilot, as you would be infallibly lost in 47 a labyrinth of islands, rock, and shallows, which its exterior presents. When you have entered, you soon discover the pretended fort of *Balise*, which rises near a few wooden houses, that serve to lodge the officers of the customs, and the pilots, who are numerous, the port of New Orleans being much frequented. The banks of the stream are bordered with reeds, whose roots are concealed by the water.

This country is scarcely habitable, and I sincerely commiserate the unfortunate recluses at the Balise. We received on board three officers, who had inebriated themselves to chase melancholy, with which they must necessarily be overcome. Their visit was of short duration, and we continued our course on the *Meschassebe*, whose bed is solely formed of the immense quantity of trees which it continually undermines. It is impossible to form an idea of the confusion of trunks of trees, and ruins of every description, which

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nature seems to have conveyed thither, to consolidate the earth, and perhaps form new soils. These trees, either meeting reeds that border the margins, or mud which the stream deposits, are impeded, and thus bar the passage of others; they then are covered with the mud, upon which reeds and other plants vegetate, and man ventures to inhabit a soil, as yet, possessing little solidity. We had already performed about 15 miles, when the captain requested me to ascend the shrouds, and look to the east; I did so, and the sea, from whence we were separated by three miles, covered with swamps, appeared at our feet, evidently much lower than the surface of the stream, which is very natural; but one is surprised that a current so rapid should not take this declivity, which appears much more favourable to conduct it to the sea, and which, besides, offers but very few obstacles.

The windings of the current, and the rapidity of its course, render the passage of 130 miles, the distance from its mouth to New Orleans, extremely difficult. Not being able to weather a point, owing to the wind, we anchored in front of the second fort upon the river, called *Plaquemine*, which appeared well situated, and kept in good order. The captain landed with me; I saw nothing curious but a dead crocodile; but as I had every reason to suppose that I should see them alive, I did not attentively examine it. We were upon the left bank, from whence we crossed to the right, where we found a French dwelling; being, I believe, the first that is found on mounting the stream. Our eyes were struck with the appearance of an old hut, the ruins of which floated, as it were, on the water, being in a hollow which the current had inundated. We entered, and only found two women, a mother and daughter, both very melancholy, who informed us that they had not yet recovered from their terror, which the overflowing had caused, and of which we saw the ruinous effects. A house had been erected near; but the daughter stated that she did not conceive herself in greater safety there than in the other; indeed, it may be truly said, that they were inhabitants of a soil always floating upon the Mississippi; and I was surprised to behold oxen pacing over the spongy earth, which I every instant expected to behold sink in the abyss. A favourable wind at length compelled us to quit this family, whose wretched situation, in the midst of crocodiles, serpents, and bulls, really afflicted me.

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Our vessel, as I have before stated, was a fast sailer, and we passed all those that came in sight; one of which, an English bark, assuredly jealous of the superiority of our vessel, left us only the space requisite to pass between it and the bank, and upon our approach he steered towards the land, and we touched; when every effort that was made for seven days, to get off, was in vain; at the expiration of this period, however, they succeeded, and got in safety to New Orleans. You will doubtless enquire how I occupied myself during this period, amidst the very *charming* country I have recently described. The first day I went out shooting, and killed a red bird, called the Cardinal, together with an animal which the inhabitants, who begin to increase, denominate a hare, but which resembles more the rabbit; on my return I found Mr. Steward, the owner of the vessel, on board, who spoke French about as well as I do the English; we however made shift to understand one another; and he took me in his chaise, about five o'clock, when we drove off towards New Orleans. We here found a pretty good road, and slept at a passable Inn, about seven leagues from the city, the landlord of which would insist upon it, that I must be in possession of news, since I recently came from Jamaica: so positive was he, that I gratified his curiosity, and the following day we arrived at New Orleans, a place of which we have so faint an idea in Europe. The view of it is magnificent, the effect of which is heightened in proportion to the vast and melancholy solitudes I had so recently passed. The Mississippi, which continues nearly the same breadth up to St. Louis, presents a semicircle in front of the city, which forms the circumference. It is covered with a forest of ships of all sizes; and its depth enables them to approach the shore, which is banked up, so as to prevent the incursion of the waters. Without this dam New Orleans would be submerged; for the surface of the stream is nearly five feet above the city, which goes in a delivity as it recedes from thence, and its extremity, as I may say, appears lost in the swamps. The road uniformly continues on the left bank of the river; which is skirted with pleasant dwellings, where they cultivate Indian corn and sugar, while the 49 back ground uniformly displays the dark green of the cypress, rising from the water, its branches decorated with a white pendant moss, called *Spaniard's beard*. The entrance of the city is defended by a fort, when you arrive at a handsome square, planted with trees, yet

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young, which permit the eye to survey the three angles, the fourth being upon the stream. The church and some elegant houses form the opposite side, producing an agreeable effect; the streets are straight, of equal width, and cut at right angles, having foot-ways for pedestrians, and two gutters for the water to run off, but they are not paved; all this part of Louisiana is a land of alluvions, stone is extremely rare, and as the objects of exportation are light, the vessels cannot leave their ballast. A large quay runs the whole length of the city, and is always covered with the merchandize of French, English, Americans, and Indians, who very rarely can agree together. These Indians are *Creeks* and *Chicasaws*, ( *Big-heads* ) inhabitants of the parts comprised between the Floridas and the Mississippi. On gaining the square, I beheld upon a good house this inscription, *Hotel Trimoulet*, which my companion informed me was the best tavern in the city, and that Generals Lefebvre, Desnouettes, and Lallemant were lodged there. I accordingly entered, but the former had quitted the preceding evening, and the latter had retired into the country. They asked me two dollars, about eight shillings and four-pence per day. I thus particularize the various prices, to give you an idea of the value of money in the different countries; with regard to food, it is nearly the same every where. I had a letter from M. Thibault, a Frenchman, which I presented; he is the treasurer of the bank of Louisiana. I was received courteously, and he presented me to his wife and his father.

On returning in the evening to my hotel, I found a society of about thirty persons, twenty of whom had quitted France from political motives, who spoke as freely of politics and government as we do in France of fashions and horses. A gentleman of a certain age, with a powerful voice, sparkling eye, and brisk action, sitting daily in front of me at table, I enquired his name, and found that it was General Humbert, the terror of the Spaniards. It was this person who, in the expedition of General Hoche to Ireland, disembarked alone, at the head of the party he commanded; unfortunately he has not received a brilliant education, for which it is so difficult to find a substitute. Although advanced in years he abounds with sense, originality of idea, and an ardor for the cause which he has espoused, while his reputation for personal courage is beyond every thing that can be

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imagined. During the war of 1813, the English, wishing to possess New Orleans, had disembarked 12,000 men on the left bank of the Voyages , Vol. V. H 50 Mississippi; having had, as it appears, many partisans in the city, which gave rise to some indecision; at this juncture, general Jackson entered the Chamber of Representatives, declared the sitting closed, and that the city was under Military government, which saved it; for those very persons who, without this bold action of General Jackson, would have delivered their country, took up arms and fought bravely: do we not recognise in them the descendants of the French?

It was on this occasion that General Humbert planned a dangerous but skilful movement, demanding that he might personally conduct it, and in which he succeeded. Let us now leave him to enjoy the wealth he has acquired in his last expeditions, until necessity once more directs him to the theatre of war. General Lallemand, who served in the Artillery of the Imperial Guard, arrived some days after. He lodged in the country from economical motives; and it is thus with most part of the French, whom the last changes compelled to seek an asylum in foreign countries; he is far from rich, which astonishes the Americans extremely.

Several military men ate with us, and I particularly attached myself to a Colonel of the Polish Lancers, a very experienced officer, covered with wounds, but bereft of fortune. He is on the point of his departure for Mexico, and is, without example, the most unassuming man I ever saw; so much so, that after a day or two one is astonished to find in him a knowledge the most expanded and solid, which had not been announced in the early part of your association with him. Ten years of service regarded as nothing, and the expulsion from his country cannot prompt him to forget that he is a Frenchman; and he incessantly prays for the prosperity of his native land.

General Bernard, formerly aid de camp of Buonaparte, is also lodging in this hotel, whose close connexion with that great man led me to make many enquiries concerning him; and in speaking of him last night, his words were these. "He possesses, perhaps, the most

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profound genius of this century, and in all probability, the best organized that ever came from the Creator's hands; nothing was unknown to him; nor did he ever confide in any one but at the moment of the execution of his plans, having always deliberated and decided himself upon what was most expedient to be done."

I now close my letter, with the assurance that my next shall contain a description of the environs of New Orleans, which I am going to visit, And am, &c. &c.

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### LETTER XIV.

*New Orleans, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1817.*

In the Coffee-house of the Exchange, which is always crowded, I found M. Laurent, a young Frenchman, whom I had seen at New York, who proposed accompanying me in my walks, and we set out the ensuing day. I must premise, that the whole country which I visit is but a species of swamp, abounding with serpents, intersected by *bayous*, or canals, much frequented by crocodiles, which are called *caïmans* in Louisiana. The first day we went to St. John's, a league from the city, where we hired a pirogue, and killed two small crocodiles, of which animal I will shortly give you a description. Upon another occasion we went to Pontchartrain, where we descended a very wild *bayou*, on the banks of which we saw nothing but serpents, and a few Indians gathering blackberries, which they afterwards sell in the city; having proceeded some miles, we gained the mouth of the bayou, joining a lake, which, on the other side, communicates with the sea. A number of dwellings, containing poor fishermen and hunters, a pier and a fort not yet completed, display, in the *tout en semble*, a picturesque landscape. We landed, and directed our course along a swamp on the south side, and ere long encountered some serpents, whose appearance frightened M. Laurent, who feels that aversion for this reptile which some people in vain endeavour to conquer. I was a few paces before him when I suddenly heard him scream; and turning, saw him very pale, when I judged that he had touched a

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serpent, which had glided away among the reeds; this was the case, but he was not bitten. Immediately fired twice upon the poor animal, no doubt as terrified as himself; but did not succeed in killing it. M. Laurent immediately informed me that he should return to the boat, and then enquired why I had not fired upon the serpent? You may imagine my surprise at this question; the fact is, he became seriously indisposed, and he afterwards confessed to me, that his meeting the serpent had caused a revolution in his blood; he therefore returned to the boat, and I continued alone in the swamp.

On comparing what I have read in voyages, with that which I actually see, I cannot help thinking that authors frequently exaggerate; but our manner of judging things is as different as our characters. The size and number of serpents in Louisiana, and the dangerous sting of the rattle-snake, are, however, incontestable truths. Ten minutes after M. Laurent's departure, I found myself so environed with these creatures, that I knew not where to place my foot to avoid them. With my legs outstretched, I was standing upon two mounds of earth, in order to let one of them pass, who seemed to pursue that direction. My two barrels were loaded, but I judged it expedient to husband them, though in 52 this cruel predicament; when I heard my companion, who was in the pirogue, desire my conductor to come to my assistance, who replied, that it was impossible, for that I must extricate myself. I looked around me; on every side I heard a hissing, or beheld the reeds moving, agitated by the passage of the serpents, in the middle of which I had so stupidly placed myself. I called my dog, and soon gained the pier, rather by jumping than running, where I found some inhabitants, who felicitated me, while blaming my temerity, for having visited a spot which is never trodden but in the winter season, when the serpents are in a torpid state, of which circumstance I was totally unawares. The tooth of the rattle snake is as sharp as a needle, and is perforated, through which channel passes the venom, contained in a gland which is pressed by the action of biting. I shall probably have occasion to examine this reptile, when I will give you a more detailed account. I afterwards saw another species of serpent, called the congo, which is black, frequents the water, and makes towards you

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with the head upraised; being small, little attention is paid to it, though some say that it is dangerous.

In walking round the fort I found some land cray-fish. Alive, they are red, resembling ours when boiled, and they burrow in the earth, above which appears a little mound, about six or seven inches high, which prevents the water from entering the creature's dwelling. Having regained the boat, we caught some fish, which we dressed in one of the most miserable dwellings of the most wretched hamlet, I believe, in the universe.

I had too great a desire to possess a crocodile not to return to the spot where I had seen so many the first day, and I had the good luck to wound one about six feet long, which did not immediately die; the ball having only perforated the jaw, under the eyes. I got it into the pirogue, where I considered it at leisure, as it made towards my dog, which it strove in vain to bite; when being nearly suffocated with the effusion of blood, it roared like a bull. I do not think I shall tire you by detailing some of the properties of this animal. The colour of the crocodile is precisely that of the herb which is found under water, being a dark green. Its appearance is that of a monstrous lizard, its ears are nearly the same, but less conspicuous. The teeth are pointed, and small considering its size, and the alleged voracity of its nature. The head, without being covered with scales, is guarded by a skin equally as hard, which, plaited, gives it that appearance. It has no tongue, but several membranes, or moving cartilages, perfectly white, which fill the underjaw whereto they are attached in every direction, so that rising or falling they perform the same functions as the tongue. Its paws resemble those of the lizard, formed like hands, the fingers united by a membrane, particularly 53 the hinder ones. I had been told that its nails were less pointed than the teeth, which is certainly the fact; for after having killed one, as it floated, my conductor and myself paid the greatest attention to it.

I remember having read that Laborde, out of ten birds which, he killed, often found but two or three, as the crocodiles, who were more agile than himself, frequently seized them by the head, while he held them by the legs. I witnessed nothing of this kind, and I am sorry

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for it; on the contrary, they fly the presence of man, but not always the discharge of the gun.

The great enemy of the crocodile is man; and is he not so of all the animals who do not bend before him? the sword-fish is hated by fishermen, because he lacerates the net with a forked lance, which springs from his mouth, as well as the shark, and a species of tortoise, whose beak, as I may say, is bent under; this I saw near the lake of Pontchartrain. I have never tasted the flesh of the caïman, or crocodile, which does not seem to be much esteemed, as I was obliged to throw away those I killed, since neither the inhabitants nor the negroes requested them of me; very good leather is made of the skin, which is used for boots. This amphibious creature buries itself during the winter in the muds of Louisiana, and continues torpid during the cold weather, awakening only in the spring, when the season breaks. Every thing considered, the crocodile is much less feared at New Orleans and Louisiana than we imagine in Europe. It is only dreaded by hogs and dogs, who have a fear, I may say horror, on beholding it. When the crocodile seizes one of these he drags it to the bottom of the water, where he probably enjoys most strength, and does not eat them, as it is said, but in a state of putrefaction.

From what I have said one might be led to think that this animal exactly resembled a large lizard. The head and tail, however, are completely different; the former being flatter, and nearly as large at the end as the beginning, while the tail is armed by four very sharp excrescences.

One day, going out upon an excursion, General de Laure, a Frenchman, wishing to accompany me, a circumstance occurred which, had I been alone, would have appeared to me impossible. Being in a bayou, I saw and fired upon a caïman: it is necessary I should state, that when they swim, you see very little more than the top of the head above the water: the ball struck it; but as it did not move, I conceived that I had hit the trunk of a tree; I however ordered the boat to be rowed thither; when the supposed piece of wood sunk into the stream at our approach, and proved to be a caïman, which was ascertained by

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a little blood appearing upon the water; at which I was literally confounded, 54 having no idea of an animal's receiving a ball and not even moving; perhaps, indeed, it might be stunned. When they are struck with a death-blow, they beat about the water, which they strike vehemently with their tails. Though I have long wearied you by describing this creature. I cannot help saying something respecting the largest which I killed; after having wounded it by the ball traversing its neck, it beat the waters with its tail; when, making towards it, and finding it swim, I wished to seize it by the hinder paw; upon which, a dreadful blow of its tail, and a movement of its tremendous head, in endeavouring to seize my arm, made me desist, but in this action its head fell on the pirogue, between my legs. My gun was no longer charged, and we were nearly upsetting, when I struck it four violent blows with the stock of my piece, but to no purpose, and the pirogue becoming more dangerously placed, the animal slid into the stream, and we saw it swim on, and drag itself among the reeds. From the head to the tail it measured about nine feet. I was very desirous to have it stuffed, for which they asked me 25 dollars, rather more than 5 *l.* English, which I thought too dear, and so abandoned the thought. In my other walks I saw numerous birds, unknown to me, such as the *pelican* , a species of *blue-joy* , the *mock-bird* , which imitates the chant of every other, the *fly-catcher* , the eagle, and that species of *vulture* which I had before observed at Jamaica; some others, such as the crow, the heron, and the wild goose, which are found in Europe, I also observed; but the most beautiful are the *pope* bird, whose head seems bound with the most bright azure blue, and the *cardinal* , being entirely of a dazzling scarlet: the former is as big as a large canary, and the latter the size of the blackbird, though rather more slender. Fish, in the Mississippi, are not very abundant, on account of the rapidity of the current, but are plentiful in the lakes and bayous.

The swamps which commence on quitting New Orleans, abound with the cypress, whose trunk rises from the waters; their surface is slippery, which is very incommodious to the sportsman. Among these cypresses are found the poplars and other trees, and the American palm, from which hats are manufactured, are common. From the trees

hang quantities of *lianes*; but what is most curious is the Spanish beard, a kind of moss growing on the trees, in particular the cypress, from whence it hangs in tufts of eight or ten feet long; which, at a distance, gives them the appearance of large pines.—Upon a close examination, you find that it is like a coarse blackish thread, as thick as horse-hair, covered with a brittle moss, of a greyish colour, approaching white; nearly all the mattresses at New Orleans are made of this plant; possessing the elasticity of ours, being also fresher, but flattening sooner than those of Europe.

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Some deer are still found, though they are rare, because sportsmen abound here; their antlers, less branching than ours, project much more forwards; a species of animal between the hare and the rabbit, for it resembles the first in shape, and burrows like the second; and squirrels, whose flesh is highly esteemed, are almost all the quadrupeds I have observed.

There are many savages at New Orleans, but they have almost lost their national characteristic, from their proximity to the city; they are even despised by their wild countrymen. Some of them work at the port, where having gained a little money, they uniformly get drunk, which always gives rise to sanguinary conflicts. They are extremely jealous of their women, for when it so happens to the white, or a negro, to surprise one of them, the husband is so persevering in his pursuit, that it is difficult to evade his vengeance, which consists, as I am told, in cutting off the offender's ears. As it is my intention to ascend the Mississippi and the Ohio, and then to return to New York by Lake Erie and the Falls of Niagara, I shall, no doubt, behold others possessing all their ancient customs, and, therefore, await till then in order to describe them.

In the neighbourhood of New Orleans, they cultivate sugar, indigo, Indian corn, and rice; sugar is also an excellent article of commerce, but I find it less agreeable and sweet than that of the Islands; the cane continues longer in the ground, and does not arrive at sufficient maturity to flourish: it is cultivated to an extent of forty leagues north of the city;

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to which succeeds the cotton, then corn, and lastly tobacco. But I will not anticipate, in the voyage I am going to make, I shall have time to descant on the different productions of this immense country; where nature is at length compelled to yield to the efforts of civilization and industry.

The population of New Orleans is computed at 20,000 souls and the inhabitants are lively. As commerce flourishes, and money circulates with wonderful rapidity, no attempt is made to impede it. The emigrations from the east of the United States to the westward of the Alleghany Mountains, a country watered by immense rivers, all falling into the Mississippi, contribute to enrich this city, which is, by this means, the only depository of the productions of a country twice as large as the whole of France. Men love pleasure here as much as in any part of the globe; the females are lovely, and please me much more than those of North America. It is painful to observe how the rage for duelling exists; no country produces such deplorable instances of this barbarous infatuation, which incessantly arms one citizen against his neighbour. Being frequently engaged in this way, is with them a certain proof of their courage; that 56 which is most shocking is, that every one carries arms as in time of war. When at the Exchange coffee-house, the general *rendezvous*, two individuals dispute, it is not uncommon to see one of them fire at his opponent, while the other runs upon him with a dagger in his hand; and this unfortunately occurs with impunity. If the salutary and severe laws do not stop these duels, they nevertheless do honour to the government, which exerts itself to the utmost in order to ensure tranquillity. It is to be hoped that the influx of Americans whose manners are gentle, will, by degrees, eradicate these false notions of honour. New Orleans, as well as every other great city in the world, a rank to which it may justly aspire, stands in need of an active police and rigid justice. I thought I could perceive, and strangers also assure me it is a fact, that the inhabitants are not so well-informed as the rest of the Americans; nevertheless, nature has favoured them with that acute perception which distinguishes the inhabitants of the South. From what I have said, and possessing the advantage of conversing in the same language, every thing leads me to prefer Louisiana and its capital, to the other parts of

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America. The badness of the climate would prompt me to prefer New York to Philadelphia. In fact, when we call to mind, that the burning sun darts its rays for a portion of the year upon immense swamps, it most give rise to constant vapours detrimental to health; yet, when the overflow took place in 1812, at which period the Mississippi overthrowing its boundaries, the whole country was submerged, and the streets of Orleans were visited in boats; after this dreadful deluge, for such it became in a country completely flat, the season was not more unhealthy, to the great astonishment of every body.

As these inundations may frequently happen from the negligence of the natives in keeping up the embankments, though there are overseers appointed to execute the necessary works, I am astonished that they have not surrounded the city by a fortification, which would at once answer two most essential purposes of safeguard.

As they formerly used to comprehend under the title of Louisiana, almost all the territory watered by the Mississippi, and its tributary streams, it is generally supposed that this country produces tobacco, corn, &c. but this is erroneous, as far as relates to Louisiana as it actually exists, forming one of the Union States, for it only extends three degrees, or 60 leagues, in a direct line north of New Orleans. Amidst the population, which is for the most part French, some Spaniards are observable; indeed, from 1769, they occupied this country. Numerous Americans also flock hither, and cultivate alliances with French families. 57 The religion that predominates among the French, the negroes, and the mulattos, is the Catholic.

The Chamber of Representatives presents nothing imposing; the theatre having been destroyed by fire some time antecedent to my arrival, I only saw a temporary building of wood, where they represent comedies, and some of our melo-dramas, in a wretched and noisy manner.

On the 15th of May, Colonel Charassin proceeded to his destination; being the conveyer of letters to the Mexican Congress, sometimes difficult to be found; for on the least

advantage gained by the royal Spanish forces, this new government is frequently changed. I accompanied him to the vessel, and returned with a sorrowful heart, deploring the fate of a gallant officer, whose poverty compelled him to espouse a cause which presented more perils than glory, or any stable advantages, as the Spaniards only employ the French from motives of necessity.

Having for some days determined to quit, I engaged my passage in a beautiful steam-boat, called the *Vesuvius*, a very appropriate name for this kind of vessel. It is to proceed on the 16th at 11 o'clock, for Louisville, on the Ohio, five hundred leagues above New Orleans. I made my preparations, purchasing a large quantity of ammunition, of shot, powder, and ball, and other things necessary on commencing so long a journey.

*The 16th.* —Nearly all those gentlemen whom I had known at the Hotel Trimoulet, accompanied me to the shore to bid me farewell; and at the same time enjoy the sight of this immense steam-vessel, which, when putting off, seems as if conveying an entire colony to some remote district. They have just fired off two cannons, and we are gaining the mid-current; on board; and on the banks, all hats are off, and waving in the air, and I bid adieu to New Orleans, after having enjoyed the spectacle which the vast Mississippi presents; one of whose banks, covered with an enormous population, and extensive city, finely contrasts with the desolate appearance of the opposite shores. Mr. Linch, the proprietor of the steam-boat, speaks French pretty well, and tells me that he is to proceed with us the whole voyage; and that out of nearly fifty passengers now on board, only eight or ten will remain when we arrive at our destined port, the rest being bound for different places on either bank of the river; I have also formed an acquaintance with a German, named Samuel Hermann, and now close my letter, figuring to myself that you also wish me a prosperous voyage. *Voyages*, Vol. V. I

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*On the Mississippi, on board the Vesuvius.*

As you have often requested a concise account of all that passes, I shall give you a regular journal, and close my letters whenever occasion presents itself to convey them to New Orleans.

16 *th* May , 1817.—We proceeded perfectly well till night, when the vessel struck ground, and we had great difficulty to regain deep water, at length, having succeeded, we consoled ourselves for this delay, in admiring the ensuing morning the habitations on either bank, which are by no means so wild in appearance as we figure them in Europe, at least, in the vicinity of New Orleans.

Among those who speak French, and with whom I have formed acquaintance, are two French inhabitants returning home. One is a cultivator of cotton, which he informs me produces 15,000 francs, or upwards of six hundred pound English, without overworking his twenty-five negros, which yields ten per cent on the capital of his land. This product demands no expenditure or machinery, as the cotton is taken from the bark with the hand. The other cultivates sugar; he confessed that he very much fatigued his fifty negroes, but that his estate produced him from twenty to twenty-four per cent.; this is a wide difference, but is it equivalent to the exertion required. The first tells me, that he would very readily cultivate the sugar-cane, but that his capital is not sufficient; besides which, having no children, he found himself happier in not over fatiguing himself or his negroes. This worthy man resides at *Pointe Coupée* , on the right bank of the stream, fifty leagues above New Orleans, on an elevated ground very beautifully situated. High land is so called in this country, when the possessor is not obliged to raise a mound to oppose the efforts of the current. Every one may judge according to his opinion, and the sensibility of his nature, respecting this colony, but it is necessary to have travelled in sugar countries to form any idea of the barbarity of the whites towards the wretched negroes, and, consequently, to

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thank him whose gentle heart prompts him to feel for these unfortunate beings, whom so small a portion of mankind are led to regard as their fellow-men.

It seems that the whites of the Colonies think themselves of a different race from the Africans; and supposing such to be the case, do they not equally with ourselves spring from the Creator's hand? Who then authorizes the flagellations and unmerciful labor to which they are subjected, and the infamous speculation which avarice excites in regard to the scantiness of their 59 sustenance? These negroes are so wretched that they frequently throw themselves into the stream, not with that sentiment of despair which urges us to curtail existence, which is become painful to us, but from a feeling of vengeance, in thus depriving an inhuman task-master of his intrinsic value.\* It is in an enlightened age, the nineteenth century, that a traffick is still tolerated between our fellow men and a few pieces of metal. But what avails my feeble voice raised amidst those of a phalanx of generous and enlightened individuals who have made their complaints re-echo for the wretched fate of the poor negro? The man born in a sugar-plantation, smiles at your observations upon this subject, he seems to say: it is true you are in the right, and when I am wealthy I shall be persuaded upon that head. What have you then to say? I must waive the conversation and return to my steam boat, the noise of whose wheels, resembling those of a mill, arouse me from my reverie; and on either side of the stream I behold the most delightful dwellings.

\* The value of a strong healthy slave of 30 is from 4 to 5000 francs, from 1601. to 2001. English; a female is not worth more than half that sum. The state of Louisiana is one of those of the Union which has not yet abolished the Slave Trade, which can only be done in conjunction with the Colonies of the Gulf of Mexico, without they relinquish the cultivation of the Sugar Cane.

The voyage is gay in the extreme, and the mode of living precisely similar to what you experience when in a good inn.

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During the night, between the seventeenth and eighteenth, we broke a *palette* of one of our wheels, which was repaired, occasioning a stoppage of a few hours. In all directions you perceive the cultivation of Indian corn, sugar, and sometimes cotton. The depth of the river-enabling us to proceed close to its banks, and admire the variegated scenery. At five in the evening we arrived at *Baton Rouge*, the whole population of the little town, on the left bank, being crowded to the port, on firing off the two guns, which is customary with the steam-boat when it approaches any spot where there are a quantity of dwellings collected together. Among the spectators I recognized M. Laurent, and repaired to shore in the boat, but had scarcely time to exchange a word, as we were ordered on board immediately, for although it was intended to cut wood about a mile higher up on the right bank, yet I judged it expedient, on account of the promptitude of the vessel's motion, not to hazard the overtaking it, and I believe I was perfectly in the right, for M. Laurent, who instantly got on horseback in order to join us at supper, was probably unable to pass the swamps, for, notwithstanding a halt of three hours, I never saw him. Some time before our arrival at Baton Rouge we saw the two last mouths of the Mississippi, one called *Bayou Blacmine*, running to the 60 south, the other *Bayou Manchac*, which takes an easterly direction. The space comprized between these two bayous forms, if I may so express it, the *Delta* of the Mississippi, which does not constitute its only affinity with the Nile; its periodical inundations, the quantity of slime which it draws down, its alluvions, the cataract at St. Anthony, and the numerous Crocodiles which infest it, augment still more their similarity.

There is some idea of changing the seat of government to Baton Rouge; this city, being more in the interior of Louisiana, offers for the assembling of the Deputies those resources which are not found at New Orleans: it has the advantage of standing upon an elevated ground, as the first hills which present themselves on ascending from the mouth of the stream, and one would be led to imagine that it had long existed. Yet the right bank is always low and swampy, formed from mud, and the trunks of trees, and this land of alluvions is *really* very curious. Now that the waters are low, we behold its construction. I had forgotten to acquaint you that when digging behind New Orleans, they found every

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where different beds, formed from the trunks of trees; in one of which, fifteen feet below its actual surface, was discovered an iron hatchet, apparently of European make. This probably descended with the trunk of a tree from the environs of Pitzburg, on the Ohio, a country inhabited by the French long prior to that of their visiting Louisiana. I will at some future period give you my ideas of the general physical causes which the examinations of this country have given birth to, yet I ought to request that you will remark that the quantities thus deposited easily tend to explain why the river empties itself into a Cape. The general face of the country proves that they were capable, and that they have alone formed the tongue of land which accompanies its two banks for a considerable way into the ocean.

*The 19 th.*

This day we disembarked several passengers at different dwellings, which began to diminish in number, and we perceived choaked up with the trunks of trees the entrance of what is styled the false river, which is the ancient bed of the stream. It here makes a winding of eight leagues, returning nearly to the same spot. The space by which it was then separated being extremely narrow, the rapidity of its waters probably forced a shorter passage in a country which was besides flat and swampy, and consequently incapable of opposing any considerable obstacles. A short time prior to our arrival we perceived an island; and some minutes after two more; they are elevated, covered with trees, and give variety to the uniform appearance of the river, but are uninhabited.

The same day we arrived at *Pointe Coupée* , and on the right bank rises a small town, called *Francisville* , rather in the interior, 61 which is placed in a very picturesque manner on a rising hill. The enormous trees wherewith the surface of this country is covered would have obscured the prospect, had not a sufficient quantity been felled to view above the stream the entire city. Cotton is very advantageously cultivated in the environs, and at the report of our cannon men and women came down on horseback, and although the march was irregular along the winding roads of the hill, formed like an amphitheatre, it afforded

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a *coup d'œil* , which all the manœuvres and scenic decorations of the Opera-house could not display. Sometimes they disappeared for an instant and then burst upon you at full gallop from a tufted thicket, and at length halted forming a line of cavalry, in some disorder upon the river's edge. Some of the men bore umbrellas of various colours, which would seem more appropriated for the troops of his Holiness the Pope than to the natives of these almost savage regions. As this country produces mulattoes who are almost white, it may easily be imagined how careful they are in the preservation of the whiteness of their skin; the women in particular always wear a hat covered with cloth or silk, which is so immensely wide that it is difficult to procure a glance at their features from beneath this ugly covering. We here got rid of some passengers and immediately proceeded.

The shore, rather more desert, is notwithstanding higher above the level of the current. At night we perceived a *floating island* about half a mile long, formed by the intertwined trunks of trees, together with their branches and roots. I will leave you to imagine the situation of our wheels had we come in contact with this moving mass of ruins. Happily we avoided it, but at night we got aground, and with great difficulty extricated ourselves. You are no doubt astonished that in so deep a river this accident should so frequently occur; the mid-current being extremely rapid, we keep as near the land as possible in order to avoid it; for it frequently runs down at the rate of six miles an hour. Scarcely were we afloat when the trunk of a tree placed crossways in the water, struck one of our wheels, which was greatly damaged, being then in front of a groupe of islands called *Les trois Sœurs*. Having the necessary materials on board, the wheel was more expeditiously and solidly repaired than I could have supposed. While occupied at this work I could not help admiring the cold-blooded phlegm of the American carpenter, who displayed no discontent towards the Captain, the ardor which he used in repairing the soonest possible the evil of which his negligence was in some respects the cause, being enough for him.

When I told you that the bayou Blacmine was the last mouth of the Mississippi I was in error. The bayou *Chaffalaio* comes after it and seems to be the old continuation of the Red River 62 which some miles above loses itself in the Mississippi, where their union forms

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one of the finest basons it is possible to imagine. Here the stream makes a considerable winding, which may justly be regarded as not having anciently formed its bed. The red river in all probability went direct into the gulf of Mexico by the bayou of Chaffalaio. This river is adorned with elevated and richly cultivated margins, which yield the finest cotton in America. During the night we passed the land-mark anciently affixed by Spain and the United States at 31° of North Latitude, and fort Adam. At sun-set we had observed the entrance of a bayou, which it is said does not join the sea, it is called *Homochitto*. In the midst of those immense forests whose darkness the sun's rays can scarcely penetrate, we perceived a savage, who beheld us pass with an air of cool indifference, and by no means astonished; quite motionless he appeared placed there like a mark or statue designed as a denotation of possessing the spot.

On the 21st *May* , we beheld some islands and stopped to get in wood at the dwelling of an American, who furnished us with fresh provisions and milk; he informed me that he cultivated Indian corn and cotton; that the land was rather cold for the sugar-cane, as some of his neighbours had tried the experiment, which proved unsuccessful. As we had to ship twenty-five loads of wood, I thought I might amuse myself for a few hours, and accordingly, taking my dog and gun, I entered the dark forests, which a certain traveller denominates *majestic* , and, if I recollect right, as *old as the world itself*. As to majestic, I perfectly agree with him; the trees are magnificent, the major part being one hundred feet high, whose branches, when springing from the main trunk, measure perhaps seven yards in circumference; but with regard to antiquity, no country in the world displays, on the contrary, more incontestable proofs of renewed nature. In the course of my ramble I saw several species of woodpecker, four of which I killed, one having a red head, the residue of the body being brown; it was the male, the female being marked blue and white. On passing a swamp over some trunks of trees, I leaned upon my gun, only charged with shot, when a deer sprang up almost at my feet. I had merely time to place myself, he had already gained the land; I nevertheless fired, thinking him at a considerable distance, when I saw him between two trees, quietly observing my dog; upon which I fired off the

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remaining barrel, but he was too far distant for the shot to have effect. I learned at night that these animals, together with the bear, are very common; from that moment I charged my gun with ball in one barrel, and shot in the other.

At night the pilots, of whom we had two on board, informed us that we were fast approaching *Natchez*, and I was very fearful that the shades of night would rob me of the sight of this city, but as the proprietor had some goods to land, as well as to take in freight for Louisville, we cast anchor, and on the 22d, in the morning, we enjoyed the prospect of some smiling hills, the highest of which is crowned by the ruins of an ancient earth fortification, raised by the Spaniards, and which picturesque scenery broke the monotony of the majestic Mississippi. The city of *Natchez* is a mile in the interior; and behind an eminence, I was going to say mountain, so elevated did this acclivity of about one hundred feet appear to me, after the low country of Southern Louisiana. Having ascended the Spanish fort, a most expanded and superb prospect presented itself, on account of the varied windings which the Mississippi presented to my view. I then visited the city, containing about three hundred houses; it is as yet in its infancy, but buildings are erecting in all directions. It is as well arranged as the inequality of the soil upon which it stands will admit; since it occupies the summits of several small hills, which give it a very picturesque effect. The cotton trade has already enriched a number of the inhabitants; it is here remarkably fine, and is exported to several of the principal cities of America by way of New Orleans. The country is healthy, the fruits and vegetables thrive, but the sugar-cane fails. The population consists for the most part of Anglo Americans, although some Germans and French are to be found. No vestige is apparent of those famous savages whose name the town bears, and who in 1729 committed such a massacre of the French. The following being the account handed down by a philosophic historian concerning this tribe, and the event alluded to. The most considerable nation found in Louisiana was the Natchez, occupying all the country to the mouth of the Ohio in the Mississippi, that is to say, the left bank for an extent of three hundred leagues; but the population had considerably decreased, and when the French arrived, they had little more

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than two thousand warriors. Their government was despotic, and they adored the Sun, whereof their chief bore the emblem upon his breast, pretending that his descent was from that luminary. This religion reigns in many countries; nor is it surprizing that men should reverence as God that body whose presence animates and vivifies Nature.

The French finding the climate and the country favourable, formed an establishment, and cultivated the friendship of these savages. At first a commercial intercourse was quietly carried on, and good faith was kept on either side; but this state of things did not last long, for the French, being desirous of commanding them, as if a conquered people, the former, indignant, made a general alliance with their neighbours, which conspiracy, together with its discovery, might furnish matter for a good Tragedy.

The Natchez dispatched small packets, consisting of pieces of 64 wood to each of their allies, of which one piece was to be burned daily, the last remaining being the signal for the massacre. The wife of the Chieftain, who was attached to the French, in vain gave notice to the Commander, his presumption led him to neglect every measure of safety. Without being discouraged, this generous woman entered the temple of the Sun, took away some of the pieces of wood, and thus frustrated the calculation of the allies. The packet being quite consumed, the Natchez fell upon their enemies, and assassinated them, from fifteen to twenty alone escaping, who sought refuge in another part of the Colony, where they spread the alarm, when Perrier, the French commander, saved them by his firmness, which, with a very small force, inspired the savages with fear. A new treaty was then concluded, whereby all the prisoners were delivered up, and the country once more enjoyed tranquillity. Happy would it have been if they had continued thus! But having some years after acquired strength, he recommenced hostilities and beat the Natchez, taking the whole of their country from them. Some of the routed having fled to the *Chicasaws*, succeeded in getting them to take arms against their despoilers, on which occasion victory proved adverse, the French being completely defeated. After this another

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reconciliation was effected with the savages, when Louisiana continued in perfect peace, until it was ceded by government to the Spaniards.

When the yellow fever breaks out at New Orleans, the most wealthy inhabitants seek refuge at Baton Rouge, and sometimes proceed as far up the river as Natchez, the situation of which, its climate and the productions of its environs, seem to bespeak the certainty of its augmentation.

I saw some very fine horses, which being bred in a warm and mountainous country, where the herbage is short, they prove as good as they are handsome. The riders also appeared more expert than at New Orleans, or those parts of America which I had visited, where they have no idea of the possibility of sitting a horse firmly without the assistance of stirrups. These horses are imported from New Mexico, where they are found in troops. It is supposed, from their make, that they are descended from the Spanish horses which may have escaped when they first landed in the country. It is a certain fact, that the horse was not found upon the first discovery of the New World.

The steam-boat was at anchor on the opposite bank of the river, very wide at this place, and very much agitated in consequence of a stiff breeze, nor was it without difficulty that our boat, loaded with iron, mill-stone, and ten persons, arrived there after three quarters of an hour. We had on board several officers, who were to stop at Natchez, and they swore to quit us like true Americans, and therefore made us drink most plentifully. During the whole 65 of the twenty-second the weather proved fine, a favourable breeze filling our sail, united to the operation of the wheels in forcing us to proceed against a current which descended at the rate of a league an hour. We got in wood at night, where it was ready corded on the bank, though the dwelling was at a distance. I entered the forest, but night overtaking me in this gloomy retreat, I thought it better to return than proceed to explore a country where the water was already knee deep, and where I might stand a chance of losing myself altogether. We continued to advance during the night, but the navigation

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became more difficult, the stream had lowered so that we frequently met with sand banks nearly level with the surface of the water.

*May the 23 rd.*

The following day we saw some dwellings, and on approaching the shore were covered by a cloud of mosquitoes. This insect is larger than the European *gnat* and that of the Islands. I cannot conceive how the inhabitants of this climate, who have very frequently but three or four acres of cleared land, and who are therefore surrounded by forests and swamps, can bear the reiterated attacks of this insect. It is necessary to have one hand incessantly free in order to brush them away, for I can assure you that in the forest I could scarcely find time to make the game rise, nor can you either read, write, or sleep, but under a species of tent made of gauze.

Since our departure from New Orleans we met several *chalands*, or square boats, which were going thither. They are frequently four or five in company, and are of a long square, from twelve to fifteen feet wide, and sometimes extend to forty and fifty feet in length, having sides four feet high, forming a large box which is frequently covered over with planks. In these conveyances tobacco, cotton, corn, and flour are transported to New Orleans from a distance of seven to eight hundred leagues. In this way whole families are carried to seek for a soil whose fertility will yield a profit for their labours. The western rivers, being usually rapid, and above all the Mississippi, they have by no means built these boats in a manner favourable to their making way. The square form however is easier built and maintained in the middle of the current by means of an immense rudder attached more than ten feet behind the poop. You may of course conceive that these chalands do not return up the stream, they are taken to pieces at New Orleans, or else they are suffered to float about at the mercy of the waves, when its wreck contributes to strengthen the banks. The conductors return home on foot, or in barks carrying sails, and lastly in steam-boats, obtaining a passage by the manual labour which they perform in the vessel. We found many islands scattered on the water, on one of which was a beautiful

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dwelling, the Voyages, Vol. V. K 66 proprietor having merely cut down a few trees in the centre: the banks of the island appearing equally wild with the margin of the stream, there he resided unknown by all the universe besides, as one of our pilots had by mere chance discovered that the spot was inhabited. Although at 180 leagues from the river's mouth I this day fired upon an enormous crocodile, but without effect, and we now perceived with pain that the waters very sensibly lowered, which led us to apprehend a difficult navigation on the Ohio, which is by no means so deep as the Mississippi.

Early on the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> we took in wood; taking my gun, by five o'clock I had already entered the immense forests, whose appearances are so savage that the animals by whom they are inhabited might well be astonished on beholding man penetrate their recesses to chase them, in a country which in every respect appears calculated for them alone. Returning fatigued from my expedition, I stopped near the dead trunk of tree from which my eager dog was tearing away the rotten pieces. I advanced, when an animal the size of a rabbit came out, which I knocked down with the stock of my gun and conveyed it with me. I was informed that it was a wood-rat, which it strongly resembled in the head and tail. While the boat was coming on shore I placed it upon the ground, and on taking it up I was surprized to find a little animal of the same form as my rat, but without hair laying upon the earth. This supposed rat was a female opossum, which carries its young in a pocket which she has under the belly; this singularity had not previously struck me, either on account of the young being too little or that the long reddish hair of the animal prevented my observing the opening of this extraordinary pocket, where the young continue until they are enabled to walk, and even at that period, in cases of danger, they fly to this retreat, which opens longitudinally under the belly.

25<sup>th</sup> May. —On this and the following day we advanced without any accident, passing the mouth of the river *Arkensaws*, the name of a savage tribe; this river empties itself into the Mississippi on the right bank, and it is stated that the country which it traverses is of unexampled fertility, and the climate remarkably healthful. We were now but three hundred miles from the mouth of the Ohio, being uniformly accompanied by clouds of mosquitoes.

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The voyage now became fatiguing to me as well as tiresome, from the uninterrupted succession of the same objects; the steam-boat performed a league an hour, which was swift, considering the rapidity of the current it had to encounter; but the time occupied in getting in wood, and other accidental delays, made our daily advance eighteen leagues, or from fifty to sixty miles.

The 26th we took in wood, and I went shooting as usual, 67 when I killed some birds, and saw a deer, but too far distant for me to shoot. On coming on board I saw some ducks perched upon trees, which was not the first time I had observed these creatures, but I had mistaken them for pivets, of which numerous species inhabit these solitudes, and I therefore had not fired at them; I now did so, and finding it a very fat wild duck, I shot another. This animal is called wood duck, and my companions requested me to kill some more, which the excellent flavour of these when dressed, rendered a useless demand. The following day we gained the spot on the Mississippi where the first discovery took place. Ferdinand de Sotto, a Spaniard, at the head of an expedition for Louisiana, missed the mouth of the river; without being discouraged, he determined on traversing these immense regions, known by the name of the Mississippi territory. Pillaged by some savage tribes, and assisted by others, this enterprising chief at length arrived on the banks of the stream with some companions of his misfortune: several having perished; those who remained built a boat, and descended the current near the morasses where New Orleans now stands, where all, or nearly the whole, perished for want.

The same scene uniformly presents itself, flat banks, covered with immense forests containing the most beautiful trees, among which, however, the cypress is no longer visible. The poplar, young elm, and majestic plane-tree, from their light green, diffuse a gayer scene to the surrounding deserts; I every day go shooting, but the water, although considerably diminished remains yet in stagnant pools on the flat and spongy soil, while it is difficult to advance for the mud, unless you make numberless circuits, and then in case

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the sun does not appear, you are almost certain of losing yourself. A large dead tree, a bayou, a marsh, a ditch, with scattered broken branches, are objects incessantly repeated.

Our way of living on board is uniformly the same, being similar to what you find in a good American inn: breakfast consists of coffee and milk, meat and eggs. The dinner is well served, but without soup; in the evening we have tea, salt-fish, and other dishes, constituting supper; the dried fish is usually mackarel; we have also daily, venison cut into slices, and preserved in a similar manner to the fish.

I am, &c.

### LETTER XVI.

*On board the Vesuvius, on the Mississippi.*

I promised you a description of a steam-boat, which I will now give you, the Vesuvius being the largest and most perfect I have seen in America. It is about two hundred tons, and when freighted, only draws six feet water; while another vessel of the same tonnage would draw eleven or twelve; from which you will be aware, that it is rather long and wide than deep. Its length is one hundred and fifty feet, by twenty-five feet wide, and the better to describe it, I will divide it into three parts, the fore; the centre, and the aft. Towards the fore-part rises a mast, to the summit of which, when the wind serves, a yard is attached, bearing a square sail, whose two extremities are fastened to either side of the bark; the sailors are stationed on the fore-part, as well as a portion of the wood; the centre is taken up by the machinery, and a scaffolding, upon which are stationed two men, who hold the wheel that directs the rudder, to which it communicates by two ropes, one or the other rolling more or less upon the axle of the wheel, directs the rudder to the right or left. These mariners are placed thus on high, more easily to avoid sand-banks, and other impediments that may occur on the stream, and they are screened from the sun by a small tent. To the right and left are the two great wheels, and the kitchen, while opposite are its dependencies. The third part from the hold, level to the deck, is occupied by merchandize,

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such as silks, sugar, coffee, powder and ball, &c. Above is raised what may be termed the aft quarter deck, being eight feet high and sixty long. This is divided into two parts, the hinder, communicating with the gallery, is destined for the ladies, and furnished with neatness and elegance; the other is the eating room: on either side there are twelve beds, in two rows; each has a small window looking towards the shore, and a curtain, besides which, two feet distant is another for general use, which, when closed, enables you to dress unseen. Above, and the whole extent of these two apartments, you walk under a tent, which is particularly agreeable; so much for the exterior. I will now speak of the machinery, a much more arduous task to fulfil.

Figure to yourself on either side of the vessel, a wheel ten feet in diameter, with six spokes and as many paddles, each two feet square, these with a portion of the wheel, make the immersion in the stream about three feet deep for it does not require more to impel the steam-boat forward. The astonishing power of vapour has long been known, and many persons had conceived that its application to vessels was feasible. A chevalier of St. Louis, De Macon, tried the experiment, his vessel went, but an accident happening which his slender means did not enable him to remedy, deprived the public of the advantages of his invention. Fulton adopted it, and in America he found that a new discovery was applicable to a rising people. He was a watchmaker, and the inventor of the mechanism I will now endeavour to describe.

The water is contained in an immense boiler, which is half filled, and underneath the fire is kindled, and the vapour, which requires space, is precipitated into a tube eight inches wide, which soon divides into two branches; one conducting to the great cylinder above, while the other communicates below; this cylinder is three feet wide, and very strong, containing a piston which, always kept oiled, fits it as exactly as that of a pump, or pneumatic machine; it is of iron, and very heavy. It is this piston which the vapour causes to mount and descend, and which gives play to the wheels; to effect which, the cylinder is perforated by four holes, two at the top and two at the bottom, opposed diametrically, and to each of these is a sucker. Suppose the piston is down, and that the motion begins,

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the vapour forces the entrance of the first sucker,—just as this opens to the interior; one of those above also opens, but on the outside, in order to give vent to the air. The vapour penetrating by the under sucker, causes the rising of the piston, which finds no impediment. Having attained its height, the sucker which had remained closed, opens, as the other performs directly the contrary action. The vapour then enters and forces the piston from the top to the bottom, and the sucker of this part opening, suffers the first vapour to escape. Arrived at the bottom of the cylinder, it mounts again, and thus it is put in motion. It is now requisite I should acquaint you how this action communicates to the wheels: which is very simple. From the centre of the piston springs an iron bar, ten feet higher, attached to a transverse beam of six feet. From this beam, but horizontally, issues another bar of iron from ten to twelve feet distant, and behind, in a kind of ring, from which it does not stir but to rise and fall. At the two extremities of the beam are affixed two vertical iron branches, which consequently follow the rising and falling motion of the piston. Their lower extremities are each attached to a handle eight or nine feet long, and moveable at one end; one is affixed to a pivot towards the centre of one of the spokes of a wheel four feet wide; mounting and descending, the two branches causing it to turn precisely like the wheel of a grinder. The axle of these lesser wheels communicates on either side with that of the corresponding great wheel, by which means they are set in motion.

When they are desirous of beginning or stopping the movement, the mechanist (for such is the name of the individual specially charged to look after the machinery) lowers or raises two handles, which shut or open the suckers;—which in one instance prevents the vapour from entering the cylinder, and in the 70 other, on the contrary, introduces it, thus producing the effect which is required.

As the violent operation of the vapour contained in the boiler might be dangerous, there is a sucker of *sixteen* pounds, which rises when the fluid presses too much the part which contains it; when it escapes with a loud hissing noise, as the degree of heat and superabundance of combustible cause this, there is fitted to the tube that conducts the

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vapour, another, containing a piece of wood, a sort of piston, rising or falling according to the degree of heat. Without a scale is affixed, and in proportion as the extremity of this piece of wood mounts to six, ten, or twelve inches, they judge whether the heat be too much or too little; the medium being nine inches.

When in proceeding forward, any accident happens, such as coming in contact with a tree or sand-bank, it is well to prevent the wheel turning, as its opposing motion might break it; on this account, by means of an iron lever, it is pushed from the square axle in which it is usually placed, to one of a cylindrical form, which does not communicate the motion.

Mr. Linch, the builder and proprietor of the *Vesuvius*, has a machine on board which no other vessel possesses, and which, in case it touches ground, facilitates the getting off, by applying the force of ten or twelve able men; this is a capstan, which turns by means of the vapour. A horizontal indented wheel, communicates with the axle, alike indented, which, with other smaller wheels, put every thing in motion. This capstan draws and rolls a rope, which is affixed to a tree on shore, or to an anchor, which is carried to a distance in the stream.

*Steam-boat on the Mississippi.*

71

On the 27th we did not take in wood, and therefore made more way; the captains of the steam boats never take the wood, which is always ready corded, without paying for it at the rate of ten francs a load, about eight shillings and sixpence. If this resource failed, they would be obliged to cut it themselves, which would render the voyage of much longer duration; yet no one would seek to impede them. The country between the Mississippi and New Mexico, called the Missouri territory, seems to have no master. An American whom I visited, and who cultivates Indian corn and cotton for his own use, told me that he was, as it were, only encamped in his dwelling; the savages, who sometimes paid him a visit, informed him that the territory was their property, being upon the right bank of the

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river; while the American government, under other pretences, claim it as their right. Be this, however, as it may, the cultivator in question, together with his numerous family, has lived peaceably there with the savages for twenty years past; they furnish him with furs, for which he gives them in exchange powder, ball, and guns.

*28<sup>th</sup> May*

I went out shooting, and saw a snipe, which I missed; and following it into the wood, without thinking of the direction I was taking, I lost myself in a great swamp, intersected by fallen trees. The sun had disappeared, and the thickness of the wood prevented me from discovering that part of the heavens still most illumined; environed, and I may say devoured by mosquitoes, I could not pass the night in such a place, and I had been informed, that a savage, who had been tied to a tree the over-night by his companions, was discovered dead the next day, from the effect of the inflammation caused by the stinging of these insects. To follow my dog I thought the safest expedient, but he stopped, then running to the right and the left, increased my dilemma; fearful that I should not be able to extricate myself, I fired my gun three times, as agreed upon with the Captain; when immediately, and much nearer to me than I had conjectured, I heard the cannon go off twice, being the answer to my signal. Being now aware of the direction, I hastened on, and arrived in time to meet six sailors, who were dispatched in search of me. The remedy might have been worse than the disease, as it is probable they would have lost themselves, for it is impossible for those who have not frequented these endless solitudes to conceive how very easily you may bewilder yourself. Every time I went on shore the inhabitants continued to caution me on this head, on which account I took every necessary precaution; I broke off branches, stuck others in the ground, or left pieces of paper in my path; but all this, from what I have just stated, did not at times suffice.

The 29<sup>th</sup> we took in wood and proceeded rapidly: the 30<sup>th</sup> 72 we passed forts Pike and Pikering, each without a garrison, and also left to our right the first *bluff*, where the vessel stopped, near a very spacious dwelling, the property of M. Foe, a Dutchman. The

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chambers of this mansion are peculiarly elegant and clean, nor was I a little astonished to find, in the interior of this continent, the most tasteful mahogany furniture. Mr. Foe is in possession of a curious assortment of every species of ancient and modern armoury, which he sells to the savages, as well as powder and ball. This gentleman, who is in affluence, is very generous, and brings up, at his own expense, from pure motives of charity, 12 children, whom he treats in the same manner as his own.

The right still continues a part of the Missouri territory; the left being dependent on the State of *Tennessee*, the capital of which is Knoxville, situated to the east of that State, and near the Alleghany mountains. This province, which is watered by two rivers, the *Cumberland* and the *Tennessee*, is fertile in cotton, which, however, is now becoming scarce; it also produces tobacco and Indian corn. As to the corn there cultivated, it produces grain before coming to maturity. This country was uninhabited until the close of the last century. A road which goes from Natchez to Washington, passes by Nashville, another considerable city of this State.

31 *st May*.

The river having sensibly lowered, the sand-banks which are formed opposite the points, were nearly level with the surface, and gave us much trouble, till at length we again touched, and were thereby delayed several hours. The steam-boat is not injured by these accidents, because the Mississippi is still slimy at this spot; and from thence, for three hundred leagues north of New Orleans, I had not yet seen a single stone. At Mr. Foë's we took on board a Genoese passenger, who is going to establish himself as surgeon and physician at St. Louis, in the interior of the Mississippi. He has been head of the infirmary in French hospitals, which suggested to him the idea that the practice of surgery was not difficult; and as, in America, the business of an apothecary is united to the practice of the physician, he has constituted himself surgeon, doctor, and apothecary. He is furious against the faculty of New Orleans, telling me, they were ignorant in the extreme; and

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why? because they did not judge it expedient to receive M. de Fremaur as Doctor of Medicine.

*1 st June.*

We took in wood at another Dutchman's, neither so wealthy nor so polite as Mr. Foë; but on account of a glass of wine which I offered him, his manners softened, and he conversed with me in pretty good Frenchs, giving me some information respecting the western districts.

73

*2 d June.*

We had now 150 miles to proceed without having to meet a single habitation; we therefore stopped at the entrance of a bayou, which the Mississippi, in becoming shallower, has left encumbered with an immense quantity of trunks of trees, many of which are more than six feet in diameter. This incredible mass of ruins, the disorder of which has been increased by an earthquake, appears on all sides like a field of battle covered with the wrecks of war. This same earthquake, which occurred in 1812, dispersed the inhabitants who cultivated this part of the country, the soil of which is excellent.

For some days I have almost every where observed vines uniting themselves to the enormous trees that cover the face of the country. I enquired whether the grape was good, and was told, pretty well; but it is small. I also learned, that a Spaniard, residing near Chicasaw bluff, which we had passed, having imported some plants from Spain, they thrived well, and produced passable wine. From this, however, the Americans must not conclude that their soil is favourable to the cultivation of the vine; the environs of *Chicasaw bluff* being a yellow warm soil, which I have no where else observed in America. I brought back, at night, a very fine wild turkey, which I shot in a tree; every one on board was rejoiced, and I can assure you it was excellent eating. Its fat was not confined to a particular part, as with our domesticated turkeys, but spread throughout the flesh, which

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renders it much more savoury; they are the same size as the latter, but more active. We had often seen them upon the banks, surrounded by eight or ten young ones; but on approaching, they fled to the forest; all of them appeared to me of a dark brown colour.

At night, a light which we saw on the water, caused us to approach, and we found a bark, belonging to some Frenchmen, who acquainted us that there was wood ready prepared for us a little higher up: we of course stopped, and I took advantage of this circumstance to visit my countrymen, thus encountered at such a distance from France, by whom I was warmly received; and after passing some time in their society the cannon twice firing, announced the necessity for my departure, which I did with mutual wishes on either side, of prosperity, and a happy voyage.

Having taken in but a small quantity of wood, we soon had to stop again at a village called *Pointe Plaisante*, inhabited by thirty French families, forming a kind of small republic. The inhabitants pay a trifling impost to the Americans; they cultivate Indian corn and cotton, and appear very happy. The dwellings, ranged in a line, face the stream, each being separated from his Voyages, Vol. V. L 74 neighbour, by the space occupied in cultivation, and the garden, which is generally attended to with care. The peach-trees abound with fruit, of which they make peach-brandy, which is much used in the west. All the females of this colony appeared to me good-looking: some of them had come from Canada, and understanding that it was my intention to go thither, they spoke of the country with enthusiasm.

The others were dispersed along the stream; but in 1812 they were forced to quit, on account of the earthquake. Their houses are low, and formed of the trunks of trees laid one upon another horizontally, united and fast riveted together at the ends, without either nails or screws. They are divided into three rooms, a kitchen and dining parlour, the other being the bed-room; the furniture, as may be conceived, is very simple; but the bed, linen, and kitchen utensils, were pleasing to the eye, from their extreme cleanliness.

There happened to be then in the village a savage, with all his baggage, encampment, wife, two children, and dogs for the chase. He was a remarkably handsome man, and having given him some glasses of brandy, he sat down beside me, and I took a sketch of him. He was five feet four inches high, slim, and of easy manners: his visage displayed the cold, serious traits of the savage, which appear so well adapted to gain the mastery over animals; he had a ring through the cartilage, that is between the nostrils of the nose; this ring, though of lead, was not very heavy; but those in his ears, of the same metal, were extremely ponderous. His hair, bound round with a European handkerchief, was divided in several tufts, or tresses, which, at the extremity, were passed into small cylinders of lead. The residue of his habiliments, made by his wife, did not present any thing particular, unless that they consisted of deers' skin, as well as his boots, which had no other soles but the simple skin. His wife, who was sewing with a bone pierced through, his children, dogs, hatchet, gun, several skin sacks, fans formed of turkey's feathers, to brush off the stinging flies, and other objects, were all placed under a shed. To judge from the quantity of his baggage, he must be much fatigued in travelling; this savage of the *Loups* nation came to bring deer-skins to the inhabitants, who gave him, in exchange, powder, shot, and stuffs; all which merchandize comes through Louisville, or from New Orleans. The skins are sold for twenty pence the pound, the hair being taken off, and only fifteen pence if it is on. I entered the forest with my savage; but after a promenade of two leagues, finding nothing, I returned to Pointe Plaisante and the steam-boat.

Before we arrived at New Madrid, I remarked the first oaks, whose leaves are wide and smooth; this town is not larger than 75 Pointe Plaisante, and the habitations seem flying from each other, it is situated at 36—30 degrees north latitude, fifty miles below the mouth of the Ohio, and one thousand miles above New Orleans; it experienced the dreadful effects of the earthquake in 1812, when several houses were thrown down, and the face of the soil, in parts, completely overturned. Near the river I remarked an extraordinary excavation which this phenomenon caused, when many curious objects were cast up from the bowels of the earth to its surface the crater, though decreasing, is now about thirty

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feet deep: I was shown part of the remains of a mammoth, and the head of an animal resembling that of a gigantic ram, if we suppose the horns of that beast reversed; these remains bore the appearance of what are called by some persons, *anti-deluvian*. The frequency of earthquakes here does not surprize me, the soil being the result of alluvions, and formed, as before stated, of trunks of trees and mud; when the former begin to rot and the latter to dry, a chasm is necessarily the result, producing the commotions, thus experienced, when the ground sinks in various directions.

I am, &c.

### LETTER XVII.

*On board the Vesuvius.*

On the 4th of June, the difference of the waters from the right to the left bank announced our approach to the Ohio. This clear limpid current is easily distinguishable from the yellow and muddy floods of the Mississippi, and we arrived in time that evening, to behold the superb spectacle which the basin of these two rivers presents, which lose themselves in the dark green of the forests, and, at the farthest point, are separated by a rising ground, but when the floods occur., the whole is covered. *June. the 5th.* —We navigated this river with facility, which is so justly called *beautiful* ; its current is tranquil, and the banks less wild than those of the Mississippi. From what is stated in the voyage of Messrs. Lewis and Clark, the extent of the latter stream is 3000 miles, which, if we continue its name down to the ocean, makes it 4300 miles, very justly entitling the Mississippi to be denominated the *Father of Waters*. We several times touched ground, which, in the Ohio, is more dangerous, as it runs over rocks, that might materially injure the steam-boat. On the 6th we made way, but always heaving the lead. We passed a fort called Massac, and shortly after a few straggling huts, named 76 Wilkinson's City, being the remains of an ancient encampment of a general so called, when waging war with the savages; it is now uninhabited. *June the 7th* —We perceived the river Tennesée, the most considerable that

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joins the Ohio; its course among the Cumberland Mountains is said to be interesting to the lovers of natural history. The right bank is the Illinois territory, and the left Kentucky, while near us was a district called Smithland. At 190 miles above the mouth of Cumberland river is Nashville, whose commerce consists of cotton and Indian corn. During the 7th, 8th, and 9th, the rain fell heavily, part of which time we remained aground; the 10th and 11th, the country continued nearly the same. We passed the mouth of the Wabash, which runs between the Illinois and Indiana territory; on the banks of this stream many Germans and Swiss are established. I visited some of their dwellings while on a shooting excursion, but on the 12th an accident occurred which gave me infinite pain. The steam-boat having stopped to take in wood as usual, I was led to go on shore in order to see a curious cave, or grotto, which had been mentioned at about a mile distant. I took my gun and set off, accompanied by my faithful dog, and having examined the cave, which had nothing but its depth and regularity to recommend it, I entered the forest. Having observed a turtle-dove, I fired, but unluckily missed it, when anxious to get a second shot, and following the bird from tree to tree, I suddenly heard my dog bark in a very unaccustomed tone; I hastened on, and beheld it in the act of pointing, but the object I could not discriminate; I continued advancing, when suddenly a noise close to me made me halt, and at two paces I saw an enormous rattlesnake, rolled in two coils, the head and tail raised up, being nearly on a level. My dog had, I believe, bitten it under the head, which prevented the reptile from retreating; it made a vigorous motion, with a hissing noise, while the tail, agitated violently, produced the noise from whence it derives its name, and which I had never heard before so distinctly. I started back, and regarding my dog attentively, saw his mouth bloody, and swelled in one part the size of a nut; then turning to the serpent I fired, and it fell dead before me, after twice curling and uncurling its frame. It is difficult to picture the rage with which my dog attacked this reptile my utmost force could scarcely restrain him; having assured myself that the snake was dead by smashing its skull, I stretched it out, and found that it measured five feet, its mouth was two inches wide, and the tail surrounded by fifteen rings, or rattles, which proved it between fifteen and sixteen years old. Being desirous of assisting my dog in time, I made for the river, where I had a bottle of alkali, which I

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had unfortunately left on board, being accustomed to carry it about me, I kept hastening forwards, 77 calling my poor companion, who frequently halted, when looking at the sun, I found that I was running away from the river, instead of making in that direction, when I determined to face the sun, and rush through all obtruding difficulties; this I did for an hour, firing frequently, but receiving no replys, when added to the pain I felt in not being able perhaps to save my dog, was the fear of not overtaking the steam-boat. At length I beheld the stream in the distance, and quite exhausted, gained the vessel, my dog being frightful to look at, as the swelling had dreadfully increased, and black blood was running from the wound. I now began to examine the bitten part, which presented two openings, one of the serpent's teeth having perforated the bottom of the upper jaw, the other only traversing the lip. I squeezed the wounds, and applied volatile alkali, making him also swallow some mixed with water; after which I administered milk, nitrous salts, and then rubbed his body over with steeped tobacco, all being efficacious remedies, as I was informed. The next day my animal was better, and I conceived it saved, but during the succeeding night he expired, uttering the most agonizing yells. Thus the last rattle-snake I saw, for they are rarer in North than South America, deprived me of a companion, who, during one year, had never for a moment left my side.

The waters having considerably heightened, we proceeded on the 14th without interruption, the banks of the Ohio being really enchanting; the largest trees, whose verdure is the deepest coloured, are at some distance from the banks, from whence they form a verdant amphitheatre, becoming yellower and more tender as they approach the Ohio; the country is also more peopled. Wherever we stopped, females came on board to buy silk stuff, in whom I remarked a physiognomy different from that of the Americans; many were brown, with sharp black eyes, that denoted a southerly temperature. We this day got a deer, in the act of swimming across the stream, which the mechanist secured by stunning it with a blow on the head, after having fired and missed it: of this we partook, and found the flesh delicious. Its skin was of a yellowish brown, its form possessing all

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the elegance of ours in Europe, but carrying the tail erect; they are here found in troops consisting of great numbers.

On the 16th at night, we arrived at Shipping Port, consisting of some pretty detached houses, for the most part of brick, the proprietors nearly all French, perfectly at their ease. Here the steam-boats coming from New Orleans, discharge their freights, not being able to ascend higher on account of the rapid falls of the Ohio. I landed, and presented a letter of introduction to M. Tarascon, the richest inhabitant here, by whom I was perfectly well received. Not having succeeded at Philadelphia, he 78 dispatched M. Berthould to this country, at that period scarcely known, who perceiving the excellence of the situation, purchased for M. Tarascon, all the land now constituting Shipping Port, reserving to himself a portion of which he at present inhabits, and which reservation upon his part, has produced a misunderstanding between them, which a lapse of eighteen years has not diminished.

### **LETTER XVIII.**

*Louisville, on the Ohio, 2nd July, 1817.*

My last was from Shipping Port, from whence to this place is the distance only of a pleasant walk, on the shaded banks of the river. Louisville is small, but rapidly improving, and is one of the most considerable towns of Kentucky, being, in general, built of brick, and on a soil considerably above the Ohio, which is of the greatest importance, as this stream rises in some hollows, from forty or fifty feet. I found at my inn a Mr. Meslier, commissary of the French society of Tumbicbee. The forests in the environs of Louisville exclusive consist of beautiful beech-trees, whose large dimensions prevent the growth of smaller trees; their immense trunks, perfectly regular, resembling a colonnade, supporting a roofing of verdure. It would be easy to hunt here on horseback, but it could only be the fawn, all other quadrupeds, (the bear excepted) being very uncommon. Partridges are the

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size of ours, but the head differs, and they have a black streak round the neck; they perch in the manner of our red partridges in France, and their mode of flying is exactly similar.

Accompanied by a French gentleman, I visited the village of New Albany, on the opposite shore, about four miles distant; it is charmingly situated, but the dwellings are not sufficiently near the stream on account of large hollows, which abound in this part; a log-house which here presented itself, in bad repair, was the residence of the old representative of the people at congress. We returned to Louisville by the way of Shipping Port, where we saw an immense mill, the property of M. Tarascon, who exports flour in lieu of corn to New Orleans, being a very advantageous traffic. I inhabit the best inn at Louisville, and am perfectly well served; our society consists of several individuals; as there is a communication established by means of public stages between this place and Pitzburg, I resolved to recommence my journey on the 3d of July. Louisville, situated above the *Rapids* of the Ohio, 79 will always be a depot for the transports bound from Pitzburg to New Orleans, which must secure its prosperity; they talk of digging a canal, either in the middle of the *Rapids*, or on the land to avoid them; the execution of which, appears to me very difficult, as the varied ruins accumulated by the current would every year tend to choak it up.

The distance from Louisville to Pitzburg by the Ohio is 700 miles, which are performed by some small boats in bad condition, and which do not proceed faster than barges, by which all the commerce of the Ohio and Mississippi was carried on before the invention of steam-boats.

The commerce of Louisville consists of corn and tobacco, which they export to New Orleans, from whence flour is shipped to the Islands, and the tobacco, which is as strong as that of Virginia, is sent to Europe. The vast extent of this traffic is apparent from the quantity of *Chalands* which you meet in the course of a month upon the Mississippi or Ohio rivers; of which I am sure I saw a thousand, one half freighted with this commodity. Before the independence of the United States, England imported from Virginia and

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Maryland 100,000 hogsheads of tobacco, of which they sold us annually to the amount of eight or nine millions. The cultivation of this plant is now doubled, they smoke very little tobacco of their own growth in America, using that imported from the islands, in particular the cegars of the Havannah, which come in cases containing one thousand each; being accompanied by vanilla, and other odoriferous flowers. The flour is enclosed in small barrels; I know not whether they prefer this method to ours, or if the dearness of sacking, and the abundance of wood be the cause. Louisville receives from New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, dried commodities, which are afterwards dispersed throughout the interior, being transported in covered waggons, which never carry above 4000 weight, proceeding through the Alleghanies to Pitzburg and Weeling, at which places they are embarked on the Ohio.

I left Louisville in the stage, and we arrived at a good inn to dinner, where I was charged 25 Cents, the Spanish Piastre being divided into 100 parts, each worth about a half-penny. I will now describe the manner of living; at seven o'clock a bell is twice rung; in the interval between which you repair to wash yourself in a yard, or under a gallery, in tin basons, being well furnished with towels; at the second ringing you repair to table, from whence the roast meats, boiled hams and fowls, of which breakfast usually consists, speedily disappear, being moistened by copious draughts of coffee and milk; the mistress seated at the head of the table serving her guests; the dinner takes place at one o'clock, and supper about nine. American travellers converse little, but 80 are not difficult as to sleeping two in a bed, as you must bespeak one for yourself in case you desire it, and this is not always attainable. When speaking of dinner I did not mention the beverage, which consists of grog, beer, and wine, these being rare, are all extra charges, as the American eats without drinking much.

At night we entered Frankfort, by a rapid descent: this is the capital of Kentucky, though not the largest city. This province is very wealthy, for not having abolished slavery, it has a great advantage over the State of Ohio, which joins it to the north. Frankfort is regular and well built, being situated in the midst of picturesque and well cultivated plots of land. The

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Kentucky river traverses the middle of the city, over which stands a bold wooden bridge; the bed of the stream being formed of calcareous horizontal rocks; at this season of the year the waters are low, but when the floods take place it is navigable for a considerable extent from its mouth. On the 4th we breakfasted at an inn on the banks of a small river, near a powder mill, the country strongly resembling the beautiful Tyrolean valleys, only you do not behold those sterile rocks, whose frozen summits are lost in the clouds, and which afford so fine a contrast with the smiling valleys beneath. We dined at *Lexington*, principal town of the county of *La Fayette*; it is a pretty place, regularly built of brick, and one of the most lively spots I have witnessed in America, which is the more to be wondered at, having only been founded in 1780.

Money here consists of a paper currency, issued by different banks, by which you are frequently the loser; or else in Spanish coin, which is not common; small change is, of course, rare, wherefore the dollar is divided into quarters and eighths, a custom very favourable to fraudulent proceedings. There are several manufactories at Lexington, and the inhabitants appear in affluent circumstances. On leaving this city we performed six leagues in three hours, on a beautiful road.

I was much struck by the apparent richness of the soil, and the cleanliness of the natives; the custom of separating the fields by hedges is far from disagreeable, and they were well stocked with corn. Kentucky yields, besides the Indian corn, tobacco and hemp, the commerce of which is much extended; and peach-trees are also very abundant. The physiognomies of the inhabitants are more expressive here than among the other Americans, so that the phlegmatic characteristic, so prevalent in every other part, seems to have abandoned the soil of Kentucky; with respect to the females, they are, generally speaking, handsome and well made.

The horses are in great repute, as the breed is now much attended to; so that numbers are annually exported to the eastern 81 cities. At *Paris* we found a relay; this place was but small some years back, but there are now 250 houses, mostly of brick; the streets

are paved, and the town is pretty; situated on a river which is too much hemmed in to be agreeable. We now proceeded along a wild country, and barren mountains, arriving at night at an isolated house, exactly at the bottom of an obscure valley; the savage appearance of the host precisely corresponding with the spot he inhabited. I was now the only traveller left, and without arms, which excited some apprehension; happily for me, however, I was mistaken, and spent the night in perfect tranquillity. On the 5th July the road was miserable, and sometimes dangerous; the worst places being mended with entire trees, laid crossways, which occasion such jolting, that on arriving where you pass the night, your limbs seem actually dislocated. We passed a small town, called Washington, built of wood, the exterior of the dwellings being covered with planks, sometimes tastefully painted, and kept very clean; I here took up a fellow traveller, a Philadelphian *dandy*, but in other respects a passable companion. In the evening we entered a small town, called *Limestone*, the descent to which is extremely rapid. In appearance this place is very wretched, and on quitting it we passed the Ohio, which forms a beautiful bason at this spot. The stage was here driven into a ferry, in which we traversed to the right bank, where we had to change horses.

The 6th, at nine o'clock, we gained a pretty village, and after a short stay entered a perfect level plain, in the centre of which I perceived small mounds of earth, formed with great regularity, which exactly resemble the designs which M. Chevalier has given of the tombs of Hector, Patroclus, and Achilles. *Voyages, Vol. V. M*

*Tomb on the Banks of the Ohio.*

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They are about 50 or 60 feet high, and descend in a regular slant; wherefore I conjectured that I was now approaching the curious elevations of which so many persons had spoken, and accordingly we proceeded for a length of time beside a range of earthen fortifications, similar to those actually raised, having angles which seem destined for the defence of each other. These monuments are, no doubt, of high antiquity, as the savages are

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ignorant of the time when erected, or the tribe that built them. Some of the hillocks have been explored, where nothing has been found but bones, possessing no solidity, without being accompanied either by wood or stone. I am led to believe, that in the State of Ohio, which we have entered since our departure from Limestone, such unknown antiquities will be discovered, as must annihilate all our ideas respecting the short space alleged as the epoch of our creation, and the pretended period of the civilization of our continent; particularly Asia, when compared with the barbarism of this region.

At night we gained Chillicothe, a town situated sixty miles from the mouth of the grand *Scioto*, being the seat of the government of Ohio. It stands in a small plain, and we alighted at a pretty good inn, where I learned that the stage, which had preceded us, was broken down, and the regular line of communication by this means stopped. I was, in consequence, greatly embarrassed as to the mode of pursuing my route to Pitzburg, from which place I was still distant 210 miles. Having consulted my fellow traveller, I came to the determination of purchasing a horse, abandoning my gun, and changing French gold, which could only be effected on friendly terms, as the bankers of Chillicothe were not in the habit of making such exchanges.

Horses having become very scarce, I despaired of procuring one, when my hostess mentioned the printer of this place as speaking French perfectly well, and I in consequence waited upon Mr. Belage, a native of Jersey, by whom I was introduced to his brother in law, then upon the point of setting off for New Orleans. This gentleman took my gold by weight, and showed me two horses, but they did not suit; added to which, his demand of 400 francs, about £17 each, was far too exorbitant; and on my return to the inn, my host produced another for sale, which was no better. Very ill at ease, I now took a promenade in the city, which comprises about 300 dwellings, mostly formed of planks, and very clean; while occupied in looking about me, I saw a bay-coloured horse, and on enquiring of the rider whether it was to be sold, and his answer being in the affirmative, I examined the animal, which appeared six years old, and without fault; the price asked being 17 *l.* without saddle or bridle, and 21 *l.* completely equipped. Taking four bills, of 25

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dollars each, from my 83 pocket-book, I gave them, and vaulting into the saddle, returned overjoyed to my inn, at this unexpected and lucky change in my situation. I then sold my gun, and went to pay my farewell visit to Mr. Belage, with whom I conversed respecting the antiquities with which his town was surrounded; when he informed me, that in one of the tombs a brass medal had been discovered, which had been sent to Philadelphia, or New York; he regretted much the want of curiosity in the Americans, and was far from imagining that, if carefully explored, these monuments of a far remoter antiquity than any thing we know of, would not produce other antiquities of the highest importance. I now took my leave; nor is it without a feeling of infinite regret that I quit these fortifications, which my eager curiosity would fain prompt me to examine. But labour is too dear, added to which, it would be requisite to dig into the largest of these masses, which are probably those of the chiefs, where some arms or ornaments might be found; this would be a long and difficult labour, which I have not the means of undertaking. Adieu.

### LETTER XIX.

*Pitzburg , July 17<sup>th</sup> , 1817.*

I now commenced my journey, entering the forest to the right of the river; my horse seemed excellent, the weather was beautiful, and notwithstanding the difficulties I had to encounter, and my little knowledge of the language, the thoughts of Niagara, distant 500 miles, still supported my courage. In addition to this, I was to pass through Pitzburg, the largest and most ancient city of the west, founded by the French, and only 210 miles distant.

On arriving at the town of New Lancaster, built of brick and wood, I put up at a poorish inn, where I experienced the difficulties resulting from my ignorance of the English tongue. Next morning I set off at four o'clock, and as I proceeded, the province of Ohio struck me as being less beautiful than that of Kentucky. Its fine valleys are too frequently terminated by swamps; but the country is well cultivated, and the inhabitants appear happy, and they

possess in abundance all the necessaries of life. The population is fast increasing, and where I breakfasted, the man had ten children. The Germans are here very numerous, and, being industrious and persevering, succeed very well.

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My plan of performing this journey consisted in rising between 4 and 5 o'clock, going from 8 to 10 miles before breakfast, the same number till dinner, and 12 or 15 afterwards. Having a good deal of luggage for one horse, I proceeded at a walking pace, which enabled me to examine minutely the surrounding country. The 20th I alighted at an inn kept by a German, which was very commodious, and, like all the others, afforded a striking contrast with the wild appearance of the adjacent solitudes. After traversing a hilly and savage district, I was overtaken by a most terrible storm, which thoroughly drenched my cloak in five minutes, nor could my horse scarcely advance for the rain, which was beating so violently against us; at length, to my infinite joy, I beheld a sign-post, about 500 yards distant, and in a few seconds arrived at an inn, at the entrance of which I was greeted by the hostess, whose house being very full, she offered me her own bed, which I accepted.

On the 11th I arrived at Zanesville, which is large, and well built, between the rapids of a beautiful river, called Muskingum, which falls into the Ohio; it is one of the towns of the interior, whose embellishments have been most attended to; and in order to render the river navigable, they were digging a canal through the rocks which form the rapids.

I next set off for Cambridge, and after traversing mountains intersected by immense valleys, and tremendous chasms, arrived at Frankfort, a small town whose situation forcibly reminded me of some valleys in the Alps and the Tyrol. On the following day, the 12th, I traversed immense forests of oak, plane, linden, and maple trees, which almost entirely cover the picturesque valleys and mountains of this lovely country. I next arrived at a small town called Alexandria, where I remarked a great number of saddle-horses in the vicinity of a large mansion; not being able to account for the assemblage of at least two hundred horses, in a spot consisting of sixty houses at most, I enquired the reason, when

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I was informed they belonged to the inhabitants of the environs, who were attending divine service, and who shortly after came out of the meeting-house, when I was particularly struck with the beauty and neat costume of the women, who residing in isolated places, have only the sabbath when they can show themselves, of which they consequently take advantage; at Saint Clairville, in particular, I saw the most lovely female I had witnessed throughout America; she was, indeed, a perfect beauty. On the morning of the 13th, I arrived on the banks of the Ohio, which I had quitted at Limestone, here having passed the ferry, I gained Weeling, at the north-western extremity of Virginia, whose streets and dwellings did not appear so cleanly as is usual with the towns of the interior. Leaving 85 this place I had to ascend an acclivity almost perpendicular, which commands it, by the most dangerous road I ever passed, and where I was fearful of either leaving my horse, or rolling myself into the abyss: they are occupied in constructing a new route, which is so necessary. From hence I entered a narrow valley, passing a creek several times, whose banks are covered with immense trees, or, at times, broken by huge masses of horizontal rocks, among which I perceived several of coal, but throughout America I never found a single silex, or fire-stone; which is an article of commerce with Europe. I passed the boundaries of Virginia and Pennsylvania, and on the 14th breakfasted at Washington, a pretty town, built upon a hill, in a very fertile country. On leaving this place, the roads so frequently cross, that having lost myself, I went nearly ten miles round about; notwithstanding this, before sun-set, I saw Pitzburg in the distance, rising from a tongue of land at the junction of two streams, and gained the banks of Monongahela in safety.

*July 15 th.* —Pitzburg, the most ancient, and, I believe, the largest city of the western provinces, was originally founded by the French coming from Canada. It is very eligibly placed near the junction of two rivers, which afterwards have the name of Ohio; one is called Monongahela, rising in Virginia. At Pitzburg, on the banks of this stream, they have built some ships, one of which was fortunate enough to descend the Ohio without accident, not even from the Rapids at Louisville, from whence it proceeded down the Mississippi to its mouth; at length, their vessel having performed 2200 miles in the interior

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of North America, gained the sea, and has since performed several successful voyages. Since this instance, however, which was published throughout America, no ship has ever escaped the dangers of the Mississippi and Ohio, and they have consequently been obliged to abandon the endeavour. The other river is the Alleghany, rising nearly twenty leagues from Lake Erie. The Ohio in front of Pitzburg, is half a quarter of a league wide, its current is tranquil, which loses itself in the midst of hills covered by stately trees, that present an amphitheatre on its beautiful margin. The commerce and navigation of Pitzburg are very extensive, the inventors of steam-boats having doubled their activity. In another direction, this city communicates with those of the East by means of bad and dangerous roads in the Alleghany mountains. As the maritime states fear least the commerce of the West should entirely concentrate at New Orleans, they are using every endeavour to remove these impediments.

Pitzburg having numerous manufactories, quantities of coal are consumed there, which being also used for common firing, the smoke blackens the houses, which produces a sombre appearance. The streets are straight, and perpendicular to the two rivers, which surprized me, since, throughout the New World, they have so much adopted the parallel, as not even to pay attention to the winding of rivers, or other local accidents. I presented a letter of introduction to M. Brevost, who proposed accompanying me to inspect the city, and I with pleasure embraced his offer. No paintings, statues, hieroglyphics, and objects whose antiquity constitutes their merit, were to be seen, but manufactories, more useful and curious perhaps, in a country so recently rescued from a state of barbarism. These I visited, which it would be useless to describe, as existing in Europe; all I have to state is, that they are carried on with great spirit, and have arrived at the highest degree of perfection.

I found three very amiable Frenchmen at my inn, who advised me to procure arms before I recommenced my journey, which I accordingly did, while mutually enjoying the idea

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of travelling through an expanse of territory, which infused in me a grand idea of the expanded scene of liberty I was on the eve of enjoying.

On quitting Pitzburg I traversed Alleghany, taking the road to Franklin. Having proceeded some miles, I met two travellers, with whom I breakfasted, at an inn standing at the branching off of two roads, the one conducting to Franklin, the other through *Mercer* ; we chose the latter, and, although the longest, we were amply repaid, by arriving to dine at a little town which delighted me, containing an establishment without exception the most perfect that I have seen in America, and the only one in which individual industry is directed to the general good. This town is called *Harmony* , is regular, and built in the German style, in the centre of a fine valley. The houses are of brick, and the roofs thatched. From this place I proceeded alone, entering a dark forest, through which I advanced twelve miles without perceiving the trace of an habitation. I this day performed thirty-six miles and gained the town of Mercer, than which I never witnessed any thing more beautiful; it is situated on an eminence and plentifully supplied with water. On quitting this spot I entered deep and swampy forests; as to the roads I will not pain you with a detail on that subject; when I at length gained an inn, where with my jaded steed I partook of the wished-for rest. On the 20th I accomplished 35 miles over a dreadful road through forests whose only indication is the trace of former travellers, who are very rarely met; in the swampy and impassable parts trunks of trees are placed across, between which sufficient spaces are left to break the legs of the horses; every day the road became worse, the pines and cedars began to display their dark foliage, while my horse was fatigued, and even galled by the portmanteau. I halted at an isolated inn, where I found 87 neither hay nor corn, so that my poor beast was obliged to seek food on a piece of ground recently grubbed up, which joined the forest: All animals, even the sheep, sleep there, which is a proof that beasts of prey are not numerous, and by no means sanguinary. Hogs are in such quantities in the woods, that the proprietor is not aware of their numbers.

The 21st *July* , the soil appeared changed, becoming more sandy, when the birch and pines succeeded the beech and elms. During the day I traversed French Creek, which

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communicates with Lake Erie by a canal, and then throws itself into the Alleghany: they talk much of opening new canals, and thus effecting a passage from New York to New Orleans, by which means the commerce of the Eastern States will be opened to the interior.

Having dined at Meadville, I proceeded from thence to an inn on the borders of French Creek, where I slept; and on the 22nd of *July* recommenced my journey over the most wretched roads it is possible to conceive, the country appearing to be intersected throughout by the lakes of the north, from which I was happy in extricating myself, as the frequent bridges I had to pass were in such a state of dilapidation as constantly to present chasms large enough to receive myself and my horse, were it not that I was preceded by two travellers, in a species of car, with benches, whose track I carefully followed. After some time I entered a woody and swampy country, passing the town of *Waterford*, and from thence to Erie over an excellent road. Here I amused myself by walking on the margin of the lake, the town being like all those of the west, very regularly built, but the habitations widely dispersed, which gives it the appearance of many country-houses brought near one another. The borders of the lake are elevated and rugged in some places, and sandy in others; a tongue of land advancing far into the lake forms a species of quay, near which some small craft lay at anchor. Lake Erie is about 100 leagues long, 30 wide, and 100 feet deep, the bottom being rocky and solid. The fury of the winds in this part of the country sometimes agitates the waters to such a degree that the vessels cannot remain at their moorings; on this lake there are ships carrying 30 guns. I was much surprized to see this vast current of water, running from north to south, suddenly turn to the east in order to form the Niagara, lake Ontario, and river St. Lawrence, without coming in contact with any mountains.

On the 25th *July* I again set forward, finding excellent inns upon the road, which continued over a hilly country, that seemed to have anciently formed the borders of the lake; and in this manner I passed the limits of Pennsylvania, and the western extremity of the State of New York. On the following day the road became worse, and I heard much of the Savages

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of *Cataragus* , a river 88 upon whose banks they had recently assassinated an American. Having breakfasted at a wretched inn, I went forwards, and in the midst of a thick wood was met by a very handsome man, singularly habited, who was probably the chief of one of the savage tribes; he saluted me, by a motion of the hand, and about five o'clock I arrived on the banks of the *Cataragus*, at the very spot where the late murder had been perpetrated, and, at 100 paces distant, I beheld a savage armed with a carabine, near whom I passed, but far from troubling himself about me, he scarcely deigned to regard me. At a little distance from thence I observed numerous other savages, on the margin of the stream, with the inhabitants of a poor American inn, for there is no situation, however dangerous, which creates fear in them, if a prospect presents itself of gaining money. Having to pass these savages, I unbuttoned my coat, under which I carried my pistols, in two leathern pockets, in order to shew that I was armed. I then dismounted, and was speedily surrounded by several of the savages, one of whom addressed me in French, saying, “ *Vous etez pere vous? You are a Father!* after which we continued for a time in conversation, although he did not speak very well, telling me that he recognized me for a Frenchman, from my dress, and that their tribes were in the habit of calling us *fathers* , as we were the first Europeans known to their ancestors, and because they were accustomed to see our missionaries.

Having passed the creek in a boat, I now entered the bad roads which had very justly been designated to me as such; and, passing the *Cataragus*, I entered the thick forests, where the roads became almost impassable, as I was incessantly compelled to wind round immense trees, to avoid the deep chasms channelled by the impetuous torrents, wherein myself and horse would have alike disappeared; while at other times, in order to avoid the rugged banks that skirted the lake, I proceeded into the interior, where it was with infinite difficulty I traced back my way to the road.

Having proceeded some miles in this manner, I suddenly heard a loud cry at some paces distant; it was impossible for me to expedite the pace of my horse, although the cry appeared a rallying sound; I therefore advanced, and presently was met by two armed

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savages, who passed quietly by me. As my horse frequently sunk nearly to the belly, I began to examine whether it was possible to proceed on the margin of the lake, and coming to a very steep descent, I ventured down, my horse sliding to the very brink, when he advanced amid sand about a foot deep. Having never seen such an expanse of water, the animal's fright became dangerous, for as each wave rolled to dash against the banks, he strove to escape me, and I was at length obliged to return again into the 89 wood. The sun was now sunk, and night began to overtake me, no habitation whatsoever being near, which led me to a time that the forest must be my resting place until the return of day; and while thus advancing, the branches of the trees, which were no longer discernible, struck me at every step, almost entirely impeding my progress. I now sought a spot the most suitable to shelter me, when alighting, I led on my horse, and descended again to the water's margin, where, to my infinite joy, I perceived a poor dwelling, which, after so long and difficult a day's journey, was to me most acceptable; there I supped, and got a good bed, no common enjoyment in these parts; and the ensuing morning, being much refreshed, I set off for Buffaloe, about 18 miles distant.

*27<sup>th</sup> July.*

From Louisville I uniformly remarked a strata of horizontal rocks, always similar, and of the same height. The lakes, at least that of Erie, reposes on this same rock, which it has considerably hollowed, and I think it continues throughout the whole of the western, Alleghany mountains. I met a traveller some miles from Buffaloe, and we breakfasted together at a good inn, where we found a cloth-merchant, of whom I made some purchases. It is necessary I should acquaint you, that a paper currency is issued in the United States, and that forgeries are frequent, while paper issued by individuals of one State loses considerably in value when transported to another; in consequence of which they always endeavour to pass such notes as soon as possible. After refreshing myself by drinking a glass of grog, I proceeded, and arrived at Buffaloe by one o'clock, I alighted at a good looking inn, but was ill-lodged, being full of lawyers, who had arrived from New

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York to institute claims for those who had sustained losses during the last war, when the English conducted themselves more like savages than a civilized people.

I am, &c.

### LETTER XX.

*Buffaloe, 31 st July, 1817.*

At this town I found a Frenchman named Despres, a baker, long established in America, where he has realized a small fortune, who very soon scraped acquaintance with me. This place is agreeable, and situated east of lake Erie, at the very spot where it Voyages, VOL. V. N 90 seems to quit its boundaries, in order to form the Niagara river, of great extent and rapidity, which, after descending 25 miles, forms the celebrated fall bearing that name, and known for the most magnificent cataract in the universe. The streets of this town are straight and wide, but not paved; the houses being for the most part of wood, painted white; though some are of brick, and well built.

M. Despres proposed accompanying me, on the following day, to an Indian village, about three miles distant; I accepted the invitation accordingly, when, after traversing a bad road, in a forest appearing younger than those I had been accustomed to see, we passed a bridge rudely formed of trees, confusedly piled upon one another, and thus arrived at the first habitation of the village, which belonged to the *great chief*, who was busied in cutting down the herbage in an adjacent field; but on seeing us he left his work and joined us. At the period when the treaty was signed between his tribe and the Americans, he was only *second chief*, but had nevertheless enjoyed the honour of shaking hands with the immortal Washington. He is a handsome man, not speaking a word of English; which, however, does not prevent his sometimes visiting the inn where I lodge, when he seats himself at table, without noticing the enquiring looks of the strangers present. His nation now consists of only 400 individuals, who occupy nine square miles of excellent land, which they reserved to themselves when they sold the country to the United States. Their

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houses are dispersed, and each cultivates his apportioned space, which, though followed for a series of years, does not entail a right to the property. They possess a number of very fine horses, which they do not castrate, leaving them perfectly free, notwithstanding which, they are frequently seen assembled in a kind of square, situated in the centre of the greatest number of habitations. It appears to me, that the use of horses, which is now become very general with the Indians, will at some period cause a change in the manner of treating them; from being a race of hunters, they will become cultivators; and if they remain in sufficient numbers, may perhaps be as much dreaded by the civilized inhabitants of America, as their neighbours, the Tartars and Arabians. The habitations which M. Despres conducted me to inspect being their winter dwellings, are built of the trunks of trees, while the summer huts are formed of slight materials, on which is laid the bark of the birch-tree. As the savages, since their traffic with Europeans, have endeavoured to obtain hatchets, guns, &c. &c., it is difficult to find any tools fabricated prior to the epoch when the country was discovered; nor could I procure any thing which had not been formed by the hatchet or the knife. Their houses are low, and the fire is kindled 91 in the midst of the single chamber of which it consists; the smoke passing through an aperture left in the roofing. They usually possess some iron or copper utensils: whereas they formerly made use of pots carved out of a stone that resists the operation of the fire. Their bedsteads consist of an assemblage of low pieces of wood, ranged all round the apartment; one simple counterpane serving them for mattress and sheeting. Their children are bound to a plank by several bandages, which singular position, however, does not prevent their turning, and the best way of ingratiating yourself with the savages is to caress their ugly little progeny; for the cheek-bones of this race being very prominent, their children have the appearance of being deformed, and their colour is of a dark copper hue; those, however, which I saw in the cradle were, notwithstanding, very white. As my companion was perfectly acquainted with the dialect of this people, he procured me a sight of wooden spoons, very neatly carved, and a species of shooting tube, about six feet long, by means of which, and a light wooden arrow, they are able to bring down birds at fifty or sixty paces distant. While occupied in designing these articles, a savage suddenly arrive,

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having a hideous mask on, which is used by their doctors, who are probably astrologers also; it was painted red. A small house, formed of planks, and rather neater than the rest, excited my curiosity, and I there found an American teaching some children of the savages to read. In order to save pens and paper he made them trace letters upon sand, strewed upon a plank. He was sent to this village by the Government, as every endeavour is made to introduced civilization among the Indians.

There was, in this village, an Indian called in their language a *Runner*, with whom I expressed a wish of running; when he at first proposed a race of a league; but not being desirous of fatiguing myself so much, we ran for about 600 yards, when I beat him completely; but it appears that they run for a great length of time, which seems probable from the peculiar manner they have of balancing themselves.

The chief informed me that their proximity to the whites incommoded them, and that they were desirous of removing to the west; but as these unfortunate nations are always waging war with each other, they are fearful of being driven away by their countrymen. The Indian, who is lazy by nature, in regard to cultivating the soil, or following the employments of a civilized people, possesses, when at the chase, or in war, a perseverance beyond all expression. His legs, rather bowed and thin, are muscular and vigorous; his body is perfect symmetry, and in the traits of his countenance Lavater would certainly have discovered the traces of a quiet soul, and the most courageous spirit. 92 They enjoy long life, which terminates without many infirmities. Having enquired respecting their religion, and whether they regarded the sun and moon as divinities, the reply of the chief, and his gesticulations, forcibly struck me: "They are," said he, "like ourselves, creatures of the Great King, who lives in those regions;" and while thus speaking, he pointed with his hand to the south, I then enquired, through the means of M. Despres, if they had any rites or ceremonies; when I learned that they only offer sacrifices of their first-fruits, and the first game they kill, which they burn; and that their festivals terminate with war songs, joyful cries, and dancing. Having observed figures carved upon the rind of some neighbouring trees, I enquired what they meant, thinking, perhaps they were idols, but I was told they

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were carved by the children for their amusement. With regard to their dress, they separate their long black hair in several tresses, which are then united in a small tube, with party-coloured feathers; a piece of blue cloth serves them for breeches; this they usually pass between the legs, under a girdle of goat's-skin, which never quits them. They have also, sometimes, two other pieces, formed like two large gaiters, without feet, which they attach by straps; their shoes are of the same skin, being sewed together with the prickles of a species of porcupine, of divers colours, together with the fibres of plants. Over all they wear a large covering, which they fold with grace, and never abandon, no more than the gun, the powder-horn, and the shot-bag, the dearest articles they possess. Women are, in general, badly attired, they suffer their hair to grow, which is simply tied behind; nor do I remember to have seen the heads of any covered, except among those of the Cataragus, who wore a European handkerchief gracefully intertwined with their hair. They have usually an American shift, a short petticoat, and are booted like the males, nor do they, like the men, pierce the nose and ears to wear ornaments. They are neither so good-looking nor so well made as the opposite sex, who likewise paint their faces with red and black streaks, the largest being down the middle of the nose; and they carefully tear away by the roots any small portion of beard that may chance to grow. Having thus far examined these savages, we returned to Buffaloe, traversing the Niagara at Black-Rock, about two miles from that town, where we slept at an inn kept by the uncle of M. Despres. On the following day I repented having come on foot, as it was not without experiencing considerable fatigue that I gained the wonderful production of nature which I went to visit. Being yet distant 12 miles from the Fall, we heard a tremendous roaring, without which noise, and the clouds of misty vapour rising gently through the air, no object would prepare you for the sight of the grandest spectacle 93 nature can present to the eye. The soil is level, and the Niagara, which escapes from Lake Erie, runs in a tranquil current, till within about a hundred paces of its fall, when the rapids are perceptible. There, the stream meeting tremendous rocks, dashes along in white foam to an extent that tires the sight. The soil, covered with trees, here becomes more hilly, and at length, after a circuitous route by bad roads, we arrived at what is denominated *Table-Rock*, advancing

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to a considerable distance over the precipice. From thence the wondering gaze is saluted by the magnificent curtain which an immense stream presents, falling uninterruptedly from an elevation of 150 feet. After gazing awhile upon the *tout ensemble* of this magic spectacle, I was desirous of descending into the vast gulf excavated by the current, and through which the waters glide towards the lake Ontario.

Having descended by a solid ladder, we with difficulty arrived at the spot where the stream falls. There a vapour, which may be compared to the thickest fog, driven by a powerful current of wind, drenched in an instant all our apparel. I immediately undressed myself, and began to advance along the space which, hollowed by the wind and the vapour, forms a bended bow, leaving a space of nearly thirty feet between the rock and the precipitated torrent, having my footing on a projecting slant of the stone. You may easily imagine what a current of wind is ingulfed in this space, to which the perpetual motion of the water gives an incessant and stronger impulsion. The current of air, in short, is so violent, the rain which it drives against your face is so cutting, the fall of the torrent, which seems to attract you, is so rapid, and the noise so confused and stunning, that it totally bewilders the senses, and if the footing was missed, you would be lost for ever. By resisting the wind which drove against me, and having recourse to my hands as well as feet in advancing, I had already gone to a considerable distance, when, blinded by the rain, I lay down, fearful of rolling into the horrible abyss.—All attempts to advance further were impracticable, and I found myself under the necessity of returning, moving backwards, nor was it without a sensation of delight that I once more beheld the sun, issuing from a situation where, at mid-day, nothing is discernible, and where it is so easy to make a false step, upon slippery stones, always ready to give way beneath your weight. An inhabitant of the neighbourhood, and M. Despres, saw me return with infinite pleasure, as they had began to feel disquietude upon my account. I then spoke to them of an eel I had seen, which, having pushed with my foot, returned towards me like a serpent, as if to defend itself; when they told me there were many that subsisted solely upon the vapour, never descending 94 into the gulf, where they would be instantly destroyed, for on the shore are

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the remains of many animals and vegetables dragged down and dashed to pieces in the torrents. Having measured the elevation by means of a string with a stone attached to the end, which was lowered down from the height of *Table Rock*, I found that the fall is 151 feet; the cataract is divided into two parts; that to the left, being 800 feet in length, is called the American fall, because in the line of demarkation passing between the two, it is on the side of the United States; being perfectly straight, it is only separated from the other by all island, which will probably some day disappear; which appears the more probable, as the water has began to penetrate a small partial cascade, about twenty-five feet in width. The other, called the English Fall, is the finest, and on the side of Canada. To all appearance, it formerly precipitated itself in a straight line, which formed an angle in the direction of the other; but the force of the water always directed towards the centre of current has arched it, which renders the view more grand. The extent of this fall is full 1500 feet; the whole, comprising the island, about as large as the fall to the left, and the three falls make about 500 toises, and I can assure you that it appeared to me at least a quarter of a league. The rock, which supports the river, appears to have given way there, or rather a little further, and on a sudden, by some great commotion, which has elevated one part and lowered the other. The friction of the water constantly wears away the rock, of which the wind also carries part away, so that the fall, as it may be seen, recedes in the direction of Lake Erie; which, according to the reports of the inhabitants long established there; they are enabled to perceive.

The water, precipitated from such an altitude, produces a vapour similar to the thickest cloud in the atmosphere, with which, rising gradually, it mingles. It mounts from the centre of the English Fall, and appears, according to the sun's position, either of a sombre black, or brilliant white; this vapour is in such quantities, that on approaching the Fall you would imagine the stream fell into a fiery gulf, from whence it immediately evaporated.

From the rocks forming the walls that border the Fall rise several sulphureous streams; I found under the gulf before-mentioned, a species of white, flat, icy matter, which however did not dissolve, and which appeared only to have condensed in falling: I have carefully

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secured a piece of this substance. Having long examined this matchless sight, and finished a drawing of the English Fall, we directed our course to a neighbouring inn, where, having refreshed ourselves, I returned to Table Rock, and made a general sketch of the whole Fall, at which periods, 95 the sun verging towards the horizon, formed an immense rainbow, the colours being of the most vivid dye; this, combined with the incessant roaring, of which you can form no idea, the variety of surrounding objects, the dark green of the island, the snowy whiteness of the falling torrents, and the translucent green of that precipitated in the centre, together with the universal confusion that reigns, formed an *ensemble* producing an enchantment of the senses, which no language is adequate to describe.

On quitting this image of chaotic grandeur, night was fast advancing, and we took the route to Chippaway, where we had breakfasted in the morning; and, fatigued as I then was, I found it requisite to visit another curiosity; this is a fountain, emitting an hydro-sulphuric gas, which is received in an iron tube, and catches fire when a light is placed at one or two feet distant. It was late when we entered Chippaway, a small English town, having a fort at the mouth of a creek in the Niagara river, which is not deemed passable here, as it is only at two leagues above the Fall that it is to be traversed in safety. Among the numerous stories which are here related to travellers, I will mention one which seemed to me most interesting.

An unfortunate savage descending the stream, stopped a little above Chippaway, attaching his pirogue to a tree on the bank side, and while his wife entered the adjoining wood to gather some plants, he fell asleep. An English soldier, it is said, happening to pass that way; detached the rope from the tree, when the bark was carried down by the current, and the unfortunate creature only awoke on gaining the Rapids, while his distracted wife, running along the bank, called for that succour which it was impossible to yield. The Indian, after striving in vain with his *pagaye*, stood up in the pirogue, and, finding hope at an end, laid down his paddle, drank off some brandy, and enveloping his head in his blanket, laid down, and awaited that death which was soon his lot in the

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horrible abyss. Nothing afterwards appeared, neither man nor pirogue, though the current is by no means rapid after the fall; this equally proves the case with the largest trees, which are at times dragged into the terrific gulf. The English have a good fort opposite Buffaloe, called Erie, whence they at various times made incursions upon the American territory; and when they got Buffaloe, they pillaged and destroyed it, a mode of proceeding that was not followed by their adversaries, when the fate of war led them upon the soil possessed by the British. The following day we were too fatigued to proceed on foot, when having procured a vehicle for our conveyance, we got back at an early hour to Buffaloe.

On the 31st of *July*, I began to prepare for my departure for New York; not without experiencing regret that I was unable to penetrate higher up to the north-west among the Indians, whose character is peculiarly interesting to me, and among whom I should travel with the greatest confidence; but I should require guides and interpreters, which the state of my purse will not enable me to procure; if I could have found a purchaser for my horse, I could have easily gone to Newark, situated at the mouth of the Niagara, in the Lake Ontario, from thence to Kingston, to the north-east of the lake, and lastly to Montreal and Quebec, from whence I could easily have gained New York, but, as affairs now stand, I am determined to set off to-morrow, being the 1st of August.

I am, &c.

### LETTER XXI.

*Albany, 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1817.*

Having taken my leave of Mr. Despres, I commenced my journey to New York alone, which is 150 leagues distant. During the first day I performed 48 miles, through a country well cleared, where I remarked the cultivation of every thing we grew in Europe except the vine; I also remarked what has struck me throughout the whole of my progress in this country, very extensive fields covered with a plant called *Timothy*; it rises to a height of

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from 18 inches to 2 feet, and is more advantageous than any thing we possess, thriving in the most elevated situations.

It is however necessary to remark that these lands in America are not stripped and impoverished as ours are; for the forests wherewith they were as I may say lately covered, have left a very rich soil, and on this account, they are enabled to sow seed afresh every year. The log-houses were now less plentiful, being replaced by buildings formed of planks, and not unfrequently of brick and stone. I have very commonly seen the gradation in fortune, as I may say, of the master of a dwelling, displayed in his habitation; where an old log-house, his first asylum, is annexed to a newer structure of wood, near which rises an elegant and solid brick-house, being the third testimony of his accumulating wealth. I slept at Batavia, a pretty town, originally built by the Dutch, the dwellings are scattered, and the place, in consequence, very extended. I was but ill accommodated, and was nevertheless charged about seven shillings for the night, being much dearer than I had ever before paid.

On the 2d of *August* I set off at an early hour from Batavia, 97 passing by more savage and less cultivated lands, and frequently traversing woods, which it was obvious had been abandoned by the Indians. There were earth fortifications already dilapidated, and many large trees decorated with uncouth and extraordinary images. I then met several savages of both sexes well mounted, and proceeding at full speed through the forest, sending forth cries at intervals which might have inspired fear, had not the sound become familiar to my ear. This territory was inhabited by the famous *Iroquois*, and I was pleased with the idea that in these Indians I had beheld some of their descendants.

When the American clears the soil, finding it extremely difficult to grub up the roots of the trees so deeply engrafted in the earth, he seems to declare war against every species of the forest's growth, sparing no tree whatsoever, so that his habitation is completely divested of shade, which he might so easily preserve.

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At Pitzburg and Buffaloe, by no means so ancient, wood has already become very dear, as well as in various other places of America, where they have already recourse to the consumption of coals.

The savages, who are fond of the woods, only clear away what is absolutely required for the growth of the Indian corn which they consume, and their dwellings were well distributed in a forest regularly intersected by paths, all of which terminated at a kind of round plot, which was assuredly the place of general *rendezvous*. On gaining the ancient bed of the river *Gennesée*. I found it dry which I could by no means account for, and yet proceeding a little further on I passed it in a valley, where it was full and running; this I afterwards learned was occasioned by a large portion of land having suddenly given way, or rather changed its situation. I now saw a good inn, at no great distance, which proved a welcome object, as I perceived a heavy storm was brewing, I therefore alighted. Having refreshed myself, I quitted the inn, accompanied by a farmer of *Connecticut*, who was going to buy land in the states of Ohio, where he intended establishing himself and family; Connecticut is very populous, and land well cleared sells high. My companion informed me that the number of speculators, who traverse America in all directions, were very prejudicial to the cultivators, who wanting money sold their products very much below their real value, on account of which flour is at present very dear in the interior.

The 3d of *August* I slept at *Honey Creek*, where I left my companion asleep the ensuing morning, as the Americans are not fond of early rising; he however rejoined me at *Canandaigua*, a pretty small town, on the border of a beautiful lake; and at night I slept at *Cayuga*, in a very poor inn, where, as is customary, I was treated and attended to in proportion to the appearance of Voyages, VOL. V. O 98 my equipage. On the lake of Cayuga, which extends in a direction from north to south, is a bridge of a mile long, built of wood, and well constructed, for the passage over which you pay a small sum, as it constitutes a part of the turnpike road.

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*August 4 th.*

During the whole of this day I journeyed through a country which, from its similarity to all I had before seen, is not worthy farther notice, and at night I slept on the borders of a large stream, called *Onondago* , which empties itself in lake Ontorio, near fort Oswego. I left my inn at four o'clock the ensuing morning, traversing forests for about twelve miles, which were truly magnificent; on quitting which I beheld a lonely valley, terminated by a lake, on whose banks stands the small but lovely town of *Casa Novia* , the houses being, as is customary, partly wood, and partly brick; the former tastefully painted, and kept neat and clean; while the spire of the church, rising in the distance, produced a charming effect, against the forest's verdure, that closed the distant scenery.

At sun-set, in a savage and mountainous country, I alighted at an inn, where I was not well entertained, and the 6th of *August* I set forward, the north wind whistling, and the cold being so piercing, that, during the morning, I found it expedient to wear my mantle; but, as mid day approached, the heat was almost insupportable: in this manner I rode about twelve miles through a country nearly cleared of wood, but without perceiving a single inhabitant, as the Americans, even the cultivators, rise very late. I breakfasted at a small place, bearing the denomination of town, although it consisted only of a church and five dwellings.

Having joined two other travellers from Connecticut, a Mr. Willman, and his son, we arrived on the 7th of *August* , at Cherry Valley, situated in a bottom in the midst of a mountainous country, very tedious to travellers. On the 8th, having set off before my companions, I breakfasted alone, when I proceeded, and found the face of the country suddenly changed, becoming sandy, and covered with fir trees. Ever since I had left the direction of the Alleghanies, I saw no longer the horizontal rocks, being broken, scattered, and laying in various angles, like those which are almost universally found in Europe, and usually inclining towards the sea. I arrived that night at Albany, a large handsome town, 160 miles above New York, being, like that place, on the northern bank, along which its

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buildings extend; their proximity to a high hill having necessarily caused Albany's being so constructed. Though the mansions are well built, it is, generally speaking more sombre, and less fresh than the other towns of America; the climate is, however, very healthy, its population consisting, for the most part, of Anglo-Americans, though there 99 are persons of all nations, and some Dutch, who were anciently its sole inhabitants.

This place is admirably adapted to commerce, as it communicates the Western States, with Boston, Philadelphia, and New York; the commercial intercourse with those places having been very much facilitated by the invention of steam-boats. One of these vessels quits New York daily, performing the voyage in twenty-four hours, and so precisely does it arrive at the time appointed, that at the inn where the travellers stop, the dinner is always ready to the minute. As the steam-boat would not take me on board with my horse, I resolved to embark in a common vessel for New York on the ensuing day. I should have been extremely glad to have made a tour in the Connecticut, from whence I should have proceeded to Lake Champelin, famous for the obstinate battles witnessed on its borders; but I am desirous of revisiting Europe this year, and the season is advancing.

*August the 11 th.* —Having got my horse on board the sloop, we set sail, and had the voyage proved of long duration, this would certainly not have been the most agreeable mode of travelling; being confined to a small smoky cabin, where I was obliged to remain, as the rain continued falling without intermission. Here I almost entirely lost the picturesque scenery of the Northern River, this stream running between tracks of ground and rugged rocks, forming thus a series of lakes, inclining from north to south. At every winding the country changes, and several small rivers, which precipitate themselves into this current, embellish it with cascades.

On the second night we arrived at New York, and early the ensuing morning I repaired to my old boarding-house, where I continued for three days to repose myself, and then determined to repair to Philadelphia on horseback, where I had left some acquaintances, and was also desirous of remaining a month. At this season the country is charming, and

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along the road are scattered neat towns and villages, while the surrounding country seems but a continuation of gardens. On arriving at Philadelphia, I visited M. Courcier, where I found no letters, the last having been sent to New Orleans. I then repaired to my former lodgings, where I shall not continue, but go for a few weeks some miles from the city, there to await a favourable occasion to transport me to Italy, as, after a journey of more than 3000 leagues in the interior of America, my excursions in this part of the world are most probably terminated.

As it is your wish that I should convey some account of this people, 100 and how far the idea of liberty influences them, I will endeavour to satisfy you on that head.

The United States consist of twenty-two provinces, each having a governor, and its chamber of representatives, and deputies at general congress, which is held at Washington, a city whose territory is not comprised in any one of these provinces, which, beginning from the north, consist of Maine, Vernon, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Indiana Territory, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennesée, Illinois Territory, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi Territory, and Louisiana. Every four years congress elects a president, who directs the general administration of the States, and this individual can never be re-elected, and which, after the example of Washington, could not be proposed.

The Government of this country is the most lenient possible; the honest man is scarcely susceptible of it, living happy and tranquil, all opinions being tolerated, and every religion sanctioned. The American, who is generally cold, occupies himself with commerce during part of the day, and the rest he spends with his family.

Associations are not common, and they are generally dull, lasting only till ten at night; notwithstanding this, they have galas, during which they dance, an amusement much esteemed. The common people repair to drink beer in cellars, where they peruse the

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newspapers, or else visit alehouses in the environs of the city, where the sense of liberty being well regulated by the phlegmatic disposition of the natives, has not degenerated into licentiousness. I have seldom seen two individuals quarrel; even the children do not play much, or do it in a manner which may be called decent. In the course of my journey I have been led to remark, that my observation is just, as to the general character of gentleness which pervades the whole animal creation of North America; for I have rarely seen instances of savage bulls, or horses, and even the wild beasts appear to be less so here than in other parts of the globe, and the cruelty of the savages, is more the result of reflexion, than a natural violence of temperament.

From whatsoever country you come, they receive you well in this, particularly if it is your intention to establish yourself. The well-informed class, that is to say, the rich, or those in highest repute, receive you with hospitality; but let not a man deceive himself by supposing that coming from Europe with slender abilities he will be distinguished, as in that case he will be completely disappointed, which has but too frequently proved the case. Every thing is so well directed towards the public good, and so well organised, that you feel, according to your idea, a sentiment of envy or admiration. It is here you find the touchstone of talent; for, divested of talent you cannot act; without it, farewell reputation, and adieu all idea of fortune; which sufficiently explains how so many personages without means have been compelled to leave America with promptitude. You may, perhaps, be led to accuse me of partiality; but I have no reproach to make against this people. Their stiffness at your first approach, and their cold air, which are frequently construed into pride and presumption, are insupportable; but those who display these defects, are, generally speaking, the worst informed, who seek by this means to cast a veil over their ignorance.

As every one is addicted to commerce, the places under government, far from being filled by men of distinguished talent, are generally occupied by writers who, without possessing brilliant talents, may occupy the most eminent posts, even to that of president. The American is well informed, he never creates difficulties, but meets every species of study with confidence, and succeeds in the application of established sciences, in

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which he particularly excels. The study of Latin is little cultivated, on which account many Europeans, who are perfect masters of that language, have deemed them ignorant; in my opinion, the direct contrary is the case.

It was at Philadelphia that the first quadrant now used by mariners was made; it was an American, it was Franklin, who first dared to draw the thunder from its element, and it was in America that the invention of the steam-boat arrived at the greatest degree of perfection.

I shall not occupy myself in refuting an opinion very generally received, respecting the Americans, viz. their want of frankness in commercial intercourse; their judging every thing through the medium of gold, and having no esteem but in what regards the smiles of fortune. I only wish to enquire of those who form such a judgment, if they have well examined their own countries. In some respects, the American, in common with all men, flatters himself that he possesses qualities not his own; he often desires to appear quick, sprightly, and volatile, or else he adopts a direct contrary system, seeming to despise those attributes which he is internally convinced he was never formed to attain.

Every religion has its church; and on a Sunday the Anglo-Americans, only go out to hear the service, and then return to peruse the bible. The negroes, for the most part Catholics, walk out upon the Sabbath in their best habiliments, with their wives and daughters dressed in white; and of this class the population increases to such a degree, that the government feels embarrassed; 102 and there is an idea of purchasing a territory for them upon the coast of Africa.

There are two theatres at Philadelphia, one for tragedies and comedies, the other a circus, wherein are displayed feats of horsemanship, and other exercises, similar to those performed in Europe. In short, to terminate my sketch of the character and habits of the Americans, I must remark, that they are so decidedly English, that it is impossible they can hate the very people by whom they are communicated; even suppose a Briton to land dressed in the newest and most *outré* fashion of his country, and he would not excite

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laughter; whereas the case is precisely reversed in regard to one of our country, or any other.

The advanced state of the season having determined me to set sail in a vessel bound for Leghorn; I bade my country friends adieu, and took my departure for New York, distant about thirty leagues, which was performed partly in a stage, and partly in a steam-boat. Upon my arrival, the wind being unfavourable, I perambulated the city, which, though less regular, is more sprightly and gay than Philadelphia. A person of my acquaintance conducted me near to *Long Island*, where lays the Vapor frigate, built by Fulton. It is 150 feet long, its width appearing to me too large in proportion; the thickness of its sides are complete safeguards against the cannon's force; nor can the interior mechanism receive injury. This species of floating fortification will be of great utility in defending the coast, and in case an enemy wishes to board the vessel, you are enabled in an instant to inundate him with boiling water: it is manned in war time by eight hundred men; it is called *Fulton the First*: I do not understand that they have undertaken to build any more.

The wind being favourable, I shall embark tomorrow the 5th of *October*, in the *Kentucky Belle*, a brig of 250 tons, being well built, and almost new; the captain is a man in high repute, so that I hope, ere two months, I shall arrive in safety at the destined port; and, Believe me, &c.

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